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Emergence of the Vegan Identity in İstanbul

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore the emergence of veganism as a relatively new socio/political phenomenon in İstanbul, through studying the participants' reasons for going vegan and how these reasons differ from each other on what grounds and how these contribute to the emergence of veganism as an identity category.

Through a chronological study of abstaining from meat and the history of today's dominant animal rights tradition, I will be focusing on the emergence of this identity in terms of the colonialized, gendered and racialized, white dominant narrative it was built in and operates from and try to work out if the attempt to include nonhuman animals in our moral world as a nonviolent action can come out as violent itself, in terms of gender, race and economical in dominant vegan practices and discourses. As people who are trying to create a counter norm in an omnivore-normative society, activists or not, vegans in İstanbul are demanding a structural change from society through actively suggesting new sets of values and alternative ways of existence. In the process while rejecting to take part in certain practices that are considered norms in society, they also may also be contributing into the normative discriminative structures through the narrative they use. Keeping in mind the attempts at appropriation by the status quo through a discourse that either bullies or idealizes the 'vegan' as a class based feminized image of healthy bodies as a form of bio politics too, I will also ask if these layers of controlled epistemologies have the chance to go beyond the intersecting naturalized forms of oppression, through a cultural and historical genealogy of the movement.

Key words: Veganism, Animal Rights, Discourse, Identity, Colonialism

ÖZET

Bu çalışma İstanbul’da yeni bir sosyo-politik bir fenomen olan veganlığı, bu kimlik dönüşümüne karar vermeye zemin hazırlayan ahlaki, kültürel ve politik etkenlerle birlikte araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Aynı zamanda, günümüz egemen hayvan hakları söyleminin sömürgecilik ve köle toplumu sonrası, erkek egemen beyaz söylem içinden doğan anlatısının kronolojik bir incelemesi aracılığıyla, veganlığın insan olmayan hayvanları toplumun ahlaki dünyasına dahil etme çabalarının, yine toplumsal cinsiyet, ırk ve ekonomik anlamda farklı şekillerde şiddet içerip içermediğini çalışmak suretiyle, vegan pratik ve söylemlerinin bir analizini yapmaya çalışacaktır. Aktivist olsun ya da olmasın, hepçil normatif bir toplumda dünyanın en eski normu ‘beslenme’ye karşı çıkan veganlar yeni değer yargıları ve varoluş pratikleri önererek toplumdan yapısal değişiklikler talep etmektedirler. Bu süreç içerisinde veganlar bir yandan hayvan kullanımını reddederken, kullandıkları anlatının yüklü mirası vasıtasıyla farklı normatif ayrımcılıklara da katkıda bulunuyor olabilirler mi? Bu çalışma, İstanbul’da bir kimlik kategorisi ve insan/hayvan ilişkilerinde yeni bir safha olarak veganlığın ortaya çıkışını ve bu pratiğin farklı söylemler yoluyla anaakım ve statükoyla kurduğu ilişkiyi araştırmayı planlıyor. Veganlar, doğallaştırılmış beslenme, dolayısıyla ‘normal’ addedilen varoluş pratiklerini reddederek statükonun dayattığı, her iki anlamda da, rejime itiraz mı ediyorlar? Yoksa buna katkıda bulunuyor da olabilirler mi? Bu sorular ışığında bu çalışma veganlığı hepçil-normatif toplumun biyopolitik katmanlar aracılığıyla kontrol altına aldığı bilgilerin tarihsel ve kültürel bir soy kütüğünü çıkartarak, farklı ezme/ezilme biçimlerinin doğallaştırılmışlığının ötesine geçmeye çalışarak incelemeyi amaçlıyor.

Anahtar kelimeler: Veganlık, Hayvan Hakları, Söylem, Kimlik, Sömürgecilik

INTRODUCTION

Gezi Protests was an important phenomenon not only in the sense that it was one of the most organically widespread resistance movements in modern Turkey's history but also because of the fact that it allowed a space for various identity groups whose visibility up to that point was systematically blocked. Among the groups that kept guard in the park who identified themselves as queer, Muslim, feminist, anarchist, nationalist etc., there was another group who were less heard about when compared to others: Vegans. Different from the relatively familiar vegetarians, these people were refusing to use animals not only as sources of food but also sources of clothing, cosmetics etc. and were one of the most 'alien' groups in the park with their food stands consisting of plant-only meals and their banners that read 'No To Animal Exploitation' and 'Go Vegan': Nothing referring to the current 'pepper gas' situation in the park, or to Tayyip Erdoğan/AKP or to 'the State' of any sort thus falling short on drawing people to their stands. Nevertheless, after the resistance was suppressed, vegans have continued their presence through activism in social media and street protests; joining 2013's İstanbul Pride March with banners that said 'No Ass for Meat Eaters' and 'It All Starts with Loving an Animal', organizing on Facebook through groups and pages and dividing themselves into fractions on various different principles.

Today there is an obvious increase in the number of people who identify as vegans in Turkey as in the rest of the world too. With the rise of social media in which people can represent themselves directly and with the possibility of connecting with other fellow vegans through online mediums, it's fair to say that vegans and veganism as an identity has become more visible when compared to pre-internet and pre-Gezi times.

Furthermore, with the support of social media again, veganism related organizations, discussion and activist groups have the chance to reach more people and promote their approaches in more varied ways. As a relatively newly

born activism movement that is much ignored by the mainstream, veganism is one of the movements that had benefited from the direct reach which social media had offered to its participants. In Facebook today, there are dozens of pages in Turkish that are about vegan related sharing and promotion such as Çalışan Vegan, Vegan Sofra, Gezen Vegan, Abolisyonist Vegan Hareket, Veganistanbul, Vegan Spor, Vegan Türkiye, Vegan Couchsurfing Turkey, Eco Vegan Türkiye, Vegan Feminisim Türkiye, Vegan Feministler, Vegan Runners Türkiye, Türkiye’deki Vegan Ürünler, İstanbul Üniversitesi Vegan Topluluğu, Vegan ve Vejetaryenler Derneği Türkiye, Veganizm Özgürlüktür, Veganizm etc. Not to mention the increasing number of university cafeterias -not only private but government funded universities’ too, such as İTÜ, İstanbul University and Yıldız Technical University- serving vegan options thanks to the successful activism made by students through online petitions and on-field protests.

This increasing visibility of and the awareness on veganism has also drew the attention of Turkish mainstream media too, which previously mostly talked about vegans as a ‘crazy minority’ in an ironic way, referring to veganism as an extreme form of vegetarianism. Having been handled mostly as a diet which very few people were into till now, veganism is still far from being approached as a ‘political stand’ but rather just as a diet though not as an ‘anomaly’ as it most of time had been seen but as more of a diet with positive effects on human health. Nevertheless, the definition of veganism has not been fully comprehended yet. One of the most used online dictionaries Zargan.com defines the word ‘vegan’ as ‘aşırı vejetaryen’ (‘extreme vegetarian’) and Turkish Language Institution TDK makes a similar translation too, defining veganism as ‘strict vegetarianism’.

The way the mainstream media and even the ‘language’ approaches veganism and vegans can be seen as a reflection of the most general view of vegans by the majority of society. Vegans are seen as people with moral missions hence are compared to British Protestant evangelists of the 18th century who worked to induce a certain moral system onto other people. The fact that veganism is

widespread in relatively economically superior countries and cities rather than others and vegans happen to be well educated, it's easy to understand why it's categorized as a 'lifestyle choice' than a political stand.

Also veganism is mostly argued within academic circles on Pierre Bourdieu's 'practice theory'. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the lifestyle preferences of social classes are the result and reflection of their *habitus*. These preferences may seem like subjective choices but as in everything in the social world, Bourdieu argues, they're determined by the volume, distribution and composition of specific capitals. Agents comment on the world through distributed properties they inherit from both their and the society's historical and social backgrounds. These 'choices' cannot be adapted by lower classes because they acquire cultural and economic capital; there is a legitimate way of practicing them (Bourdieu, Nice & Bennett, 1996.)

While agreeing with Bourdieu's ideas and understanding how veganism came to be comprehended as an attempt to impose certain moral bases onto other people, I argue that veganism today can also be considered as a form of 'project identity' as Manuel Castells explains; demanding change from all parts of society (Castells, 2010). Challenging one of the oldest norms in the history of humanity, 'the way we eat', I ask if vegans are working to create a counter-norm that of which transcends the economical/cultural hierarchies by suggesting a wider moral world, inclusive of all animals, other than some. Different from other social justice movements such as feminism, veganism seems to be operating what is mostly seen as 'outside' of society, problematizing the relationship, not between 'people and people' but the relationship between 'people and non-people: animals' therefore can relatively be easier to be underestimated or at least ignored. Nevertheless, that same problematization itself makes this relationship more complex as to opening up questions about concepts that are thought to be given, such as 'humanity' (hence 'sub-humanity'), questions of violence towards nonhumans, colonialized, geographies and consequently the heritage of a history

that reflects itself within this relationship through certain narratives. So it can be argued certain nonhuman animals are relatively left outside of society in terms of moral worth, the relationship with them and the narrative regarding this relationship is in particular a societal thing. Veganism therefore, while problematizing the relationship between people and non people, at the same time brings the problem of the 'narrative' of this relationship front which is a whole area of study itself.

Since dealing with a very basic concept namely 'food' which is in a direct relation with consumption habits, vegans also operate within a neoliberal frame in which the relations and intersection of oppression forms become more complicated. Through a social construction perspective, we can say that historical and affective layers of forms of oppression seep into the collective unconsciousness of the society in invisible levels, affecting the relations between people. That's why a veganism that only targets the way and the what people eat may be doomed to be labeled as 'privileged' and considered 'blind'. At the same time, it's important to note that neoliberalism is famous for its enthusiasm to appropriate potential counter norms and affective areas through various ways to govern better as Michel Foucault would argue. Power in a Foucauldian sense, has to construct new norms in order to draw these 'outsiders' inside, through discourses and other dispositives by creating new subjectivities (Foucault & Rabinow, 1985). I argue that there are vegans today who are actively trying to create a counter norm through activism in an omnivore-normative society and in regard to this attempt, governmentality is sustained through two ways: Firstly, through appropriating veganism; by supporting it up to a level as a healthy way of living and boxing it within the health category, also a sign of biopolitics. Secondly, through marginalizing it, by contributing into discourses of veganism being a crazy, extreme and elitist idea, emphasizing its soft spot: The tendency to be labelled as a moral mission thus reinforcing conflicts within certain groups of society. In this regard, it's possible to remember other identity/rights based struggles' (such as feminism per se) process of being manipulated by power relations as well.

For Michel Foucault, genealogy is ‘an analysis of descent’ and since descent attaches itself to the body, ‘in the nervous system, in temperament, in the digestive apparatus; it appears in faulty respiration, in improper diets, in the debilitated and prostrate bodies of those whose ancestors committed errors’ (Foucault & Rabinow, 1985), the body then becomes an object of study for both power and resistance. He goes on to suggest that “‘The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holiday; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances.’” *Here, food hence diet emerges as an apparatus of power.* Since intersecting with many other oppression forms, economical hierarchies and social privilege areas such as gender, race, economics etc., I argue that veganism is a field of study that is of high potential in terms of investigating the deeply structured and intersecting forms of power relations in various areas of social life. A genealogy of this movement would be a great exercise on uncovering the complexity of the world as it is now as well as a world that might have been otherwise. Because since ‘where there is power, there is resistance’, diet is power hence diet *may become* resistance.

While not agreeing that veganism may offer a ‘total solution’ to any form of ongoing oppression, with this thesis I would at least like to offer veganism as a methodological tool and hope to contribute into the newly emerging but very ignored field of what scholar Laura Wright calls as ‘vegan studies’ (Wright, 2015).

So what really is veganism? Where did it come to Turkey from and how did it turn into a struggle of rights? This thesis aims to explore the emergence of veganism in İstanbul as an identity category and a socio-political phenomenon, also as a potential new phase in human-animal relations and the relations this practice constructs with the mainstream and the status quo through various

discourses; hoping to investigate its potential to effect and change the relations between species and within and between societies as a phenomenon with potential cultural, economical and affective implications.

I believe people's relations with nonhuman animals and food play a great deal in shaping current power relations as it did in shaping the world as we know it today. Having strong historical ties to power apparatuses such as religion, health and morals, veganism today seems to rather have moved to the 'ethical' part of the schema (which of course as a concept itself is of Western origin) burrowing much from Western philosophical ideas such as Kantian ethics. So through a detailed investigation on the emergence of veganism as an 'ethical stand' and past and contemporary approaches to animal rights with these approaches' relation to the status quo, this thesis intends to study how veganism emerged in İstanbul as a form of identity category.

In order to be able to get a detailed view on how veganism operates today, I thought it was important to handle the topic through a few perspectives, thus I have divided my work into four chapters. First chapter will be dealing with the history of abstaining from eating animals. Starting from Ancient India, I try to follow the shifts in attitudes towards animals in terms of eating them and the reasons behind these shifts and how the idea of gaining purity through food was appropriated by the West through colonialism both in a physical and cultural sense.

Chapter 2 focuses on how the idea of the rights of animals emerged in the Western world. Tracing the theories that first mention animals from 18th century onwards in the Western tradition, I try to understand how contemporary animal rights movements hence the mindsets behind the reasons to go vegan rely on

which grounds and narratives and differ from each other in a white-male dominated world.

Through a genealogy of animal rights discussion in the West, I aim to open the background of these ethical positions that are taken to abstain from animal usage today to discussion. Since contemporary dominant animal rights movement is built upon certain Western animal rights theories, I believe it's important to work thoroughly the similarities and the differences of these theories in order to get an insight of how they contribute into the making of 'the vegan' as an identity and also how they contribute into or explain the emergence of different approaches to human-animal relations. Based on a close reading of the basic theories that shaped contemporary vegan activism, this part intends to study the background of contemporary human conception of animals and the reason and the way people began to see animals as politically worthy to be included in a struggle against the existing order.

After a chronological documentation of the dominant theories on animal rights in the Western world that provided the current perspectives to animal rights activism, in, Chapter 3, I focus on the representation of veganism in Turkish mainstream media. To do this I chose two of the most selling mainstream print newspapers in Turkey; Sabah and Cumhuriyet, on the grounds that they differ from each other in terms of both target audience and ideology but somehow share a similar view of veganism which basically strips the idea to a 'health related issue'.

Last chapter then, moves the focus to İstanbul at last and tries to understand the reasons behind people's decisions to go vegan in this city today. To achieve this, I have talked with people who identify as vegans, some of them which also identify as activists some of them not. After a short document of animal rights movements and a discussion on animal rights activism in Turkey, I pass to the detailed face to face and online interviews I have executed with 14 selected people in which I have tried to get an accurate grasp on contemporary perspective to animal rights

in İstanbul, trying to understand the reasons for ‘choosing’ to follow a non-orthodox diet and a way of life. This also opens up a channel to discuss the neoliberal discourse on veganism and how this discourse is being challenged and/or affirmed by vegans themselves.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY OF VEGETARIANISM

The relationship between humans and nonhuman animals has a long and tricky history. Although never really lived in total separate habitats, as far as we know there was always a distinction between humans and other animals, increasing, ironically, with the domestication of nonhuman animals by humans. First of all, although humans and nonhuman animals share the same scientific species category of ‘animals’, the word ‘animal’ coming from the Latin word ‘animalis’ which means ‘having breath, having soul or living being’ (Cresswell, 2010). There’s a distinction that’s being made through language that had come to establish the meaning of animals as to only include nonhuman animals and separating human animals from them. The Turkish equivalent of the word animal is ‘hayvan’ which is defined by TDK in two different ways. Firstly, as “Duygu ve hareket yeteneği olan, içgüdüleriyle hareket eden canlı yaratık”¹ and then as “At, eşek, katır gibi türlü hizmetlerde kullanılan yaratık”²; seemingly translating the conflicting approach to animals in everyday life perfectly: There are animals we care for and cherish and then there are animals we use as sources of labor and food. ‘Hayvan’s etymological roots lie in the Arabic word ‘Ar hāyawān’ translating as “1. yaşama, canlı olma, 2. her çeşit canlı varlık”³. The definition of what an animal is seems to get less binary when moved to East. This distinction in Western⁴ language can be argued to correspond to the strict social construction of

¹ “A living being who has the ability to move and behaves on its feelings and instincts.”

² “A creature which is used for various jobs, such as a horse or a mule”

³ “1. To live, being alive, 2. Any kind of living being”

⁴ I would like to note that I am talking about the post Enlightenment idea of civilization that makes this clear distinction between humans and animals; through the deeply settled Cartesian understanding that favors the infamous ‘cogito ergo sum’ which has been constructed and has

the modern Cartesian understanding which favors the thinking human first and which over time came to be understood and accepted as ‘natural’ and is secured through some other factors other than language (such as traditions, laws, institutions etc.)

One would think the domestication of animals would have meant the bounding of animals and humans but on the contrary, it mostly meant the controlling and domination of the nonhuman animals by human beings. Domestication itself was realized out of utilitarian purposes. The first domesticated animal, the dog, was chosen because of its usefulness when go hunting and for providing security for human beings. Through domestication, human beings were able to use nonhuman animals as resources more easily, either as food, clothing or cosmetics, for entertainment and finally as pets. The idea of the pet or the companion animal, came to be adopted as a widespread practice only after people were at a stage where they could use animals as pets other than mere resources for food and work.

Since ‘eating’ is a social concept, it’s impossible to think it separately from history and to the extent that politics is inseparable from history, food becomes precisely a political issue. The way and the what we eat is strongly related to power relations that are embedded in societies from invasions to wars, from all kinds of oppression forms to social hierarchical systems. In a more globally connected world in which neoliberal practices are embedded not only in material environment around us but are also invested in bodies, both in psychical and psychological terms, it’s no surprise to realize that how we feed ourselves has its share from this politically charged historicity of a post-colonial social life. Thus, while I was researching for the emergence of vegetarianism in the world, it was not very surprising to find how food was used as an apparatus to shape social

been operating as the dominant discourse for a long time. There sure is and may be, although not many, communities which don’t make this distinction.

relations since the Ancient times. Still, in the very Eurocentric world of literature research, one has to go through small details to uncover such subjugated knowledge. I should note, although there were hints about this connection in most texts I had gone through while writing this thesis, the lack of proper sources on the colonization of a vegetarian diet through geographical invasions, had been discouraging from time to time. There sure is many articles and texts on Caste system in India (Dumont, 1966), (Sheth, 1999), (Sharma, 2005), (Gupta, 2005), but very little source on how the vegetarianism trend has been brought over to Europe through the colonization of India. It's mostly argued separately, as in 'European travelers that discovered India' (Stuart, 2008) as if Europe's past could have been comprehended without its colonial legacy.

1.1. FIRST VEGETARIANS: ANCIENT INDIA AND GREECE

Although the exact source of vegetarianism is not clear, it's supposed to have originated in Ancient India around 1500 BC and later emerged in Ancient Greek around 500 BC (Spencer, 2008). It's worthy to note that the idea of excluding meat from a daily diet had mostly to do with the idea of 'purity' as well as living a nonviolent life as possible. It was religion and the idea of spiritual transference between animals and nonhuman animals after death called 'metempsychosis' in the case of Ancient Greek promoted by Pythagoras and in pre-Aryan India, again an ancient religion called Totemism which was based on a belief that humans were descended from certain animals or plants hence supposed a kinship between these species, so it was forbidden to eat that certain animal which was considered kin except in certain rituals. Eating plants on the other hand was an ordinary practice since it was believed that plants were the source of some kind of energy and plants were consumed in order to capture this energy (Spencer, 2008). This practice of vegetarianism in both Ancient Greek and India has been adopted and altered through mostly invasions.

After the invasion of India by Indo-Iranians who are known to be The Aryans, the cultural features of the geography were altered with this newly arrived people. It is argued that these people spoke a new language and had lighter skin than the original inhabitants of India (Spencer, 2008). As a way to protect their conqueror status, the Aryans constituted a new social order namely the Caste System. A system which had been the defining part of the classical Hindu society, affecting the ways in which religion and politics work as well as daily social life since then (Basham, 1999). This system was based on a stratification model in which society was divided according to certain features of people. The system of Caste refers to two different divisions: Varna and Jati. Jati, which means 'community' in English corresponded to the community in which a person should traditionally get married within, meaning Jati constituted an important sustainability in societal division. Varna on the other hand meant 'archetype' and was divided into four hierarchical classes which at the top sat nobles and religious authorities such as priests, followed by warriors then merchants and agriculturalists and on the bottom sat laborers and servants. A fifth class called the Untouchables and sometimes 'the outcasts' (as in the 'outcasted'), do not belong to this Varna grouping, they are the Dalits which also is referred to as the 'oppressed' in Sanskrit. There was no transition (even marriage between castes were not allowed) allowed between castes, the positions were decided through birth and birth right and one stayed in the strata that they were born into till the end of their life.

This kind of an organization of one society puts clear limitations as to who has the power to influence political thus cultural life within the society in bigger terms. This includes the ways of consuming, especially consuming food, as well. As Max Weber argued in 1922, power means something beyond economic power; a form of power that allows certain members of the society to have important roles that assigns privilege and dignity to them and hence influence on other members of the society. This is what Weber calls 'status', a concept that is maintained through conditions such as caste, race, cultural capital etc. He argues that 'Status

groups are supposed to be in the realm of culture. They are not mere statistical categories but real communities.’ (quoted in Collins, 1994: 88). For Weber a status group is determined by the concept of ‘honor’ rather than class (Weber, 1946). By ‘honor’ Weber is also talking about a certain set of values, morals, a culture, ‘a lifestyle’ so to say. This means, status groups are firstly defined and then is strengthened by the moral codes their lifestyle is built upon and finally sustained in the display of this life through daily routines and cultural habits and ‘traditions’ particular to that culture. This also parallels with Marx’s idea of the bourgeoisie morals. Marx argues every ruler class imposes their own moral codes onto the whole society in order to sustain their position as the ruler class hence it’s *their* moral standards that are accepted as norms. If we are too look at, for example, how a specific class builds up their culture and hence enforce their status through it, we come face to face with basic mediums they control to construct this status and how they function. The means of cultural capital: Education, language, and daily consumption and behavioral habits these capitals create.

Caste system in India is a perfect example for this kind of societal division based on statuses. In this system the Brahmans stand at the top, deciding the moral ground for Indian society. Hinduism is known for encouraging a diet that is free from ‘harm’. This is mostly interpreted as a vegetable heavy diet. After the Aryan alteration of the cultural life of India after the invasion, the consumption of meat was a case that was used to make distinction between what is pure and what is not. Similar with the Totem belief before the Aryan invasion that was prominent in the geography, animals were considered holy in terms of their relation to spiritual world and those who consumed them was considered ‘impure’ whereas vegetables were the source of refreshment and youth. Meat consuming on the other hand was related to death hence impurity and those who consumed animals were associated with ‘contamination’ and ‘violence’. Therefore, Hinduism advocated a plant heavy diet in order to get close to this purity (Spencer, 2008).

Today's prominent vegan discourse in the West is partly reminiscent of this association: Talks of kindness versus nature, nonviolence and compassion against animals especially stand out in the advertisement habits of institutionalized animal rights and environmentalist movements, mostly in with PETA and sometimes Greenpeace. Compassion talk is also very commonly seen in Yoga practicing circles in big Western cities as well. One can say two of Hinduism's basic practices found their way to the West through Yoga and a specific diet which relies on avoiding meat. It can be argued that the lifestyle of Hinduism was been appropriated as a package within the wellness community of contemporary West.

One of the ways that the strong pattern in the relation between food and status thus power in India showed itself was in the form of a division in what's good to eat, and what's not. It was a way to emphasize the distinction between castes in a cultural sense. Max Weber underlines the fact that statuses are weapons to maintain the economical superiority of one group over another for they automatically exclude specific people, so that the competition over the economical market can now be narrowed down to be available only to the exclusive members of that particular status group. "Any successful, dominant class must become organized as a status group. In fact, historically this has always been the case. Marx and Engels' historical ruling classes were organized legally and culturally to keep control of property within their own ranks." (Collins, 1994: 89). Vegetarianism in India therefore not only has ties to religious practices (worthy to note that almost every celestial religion advocates nonviolence to living beings and has one or two things to say about eating animals in certain places in their scriptures), but also to the status quo. It was mostly either the philosophers (in Ancient Greek and Rome) or the religious people (in India), dominant classes that are organized also around their statuses in a Weberian sense, that thought and wrote about the case against meat.

Here we can argue since access to writing history is also a part of the ruler classes' privileged statuses, that we might not actually know about the 'poor

folk's preference of food or their stand regarding animals. The literature on food basically relies on economic or religious developments and to my surprise there is very little source on how people were actually relating to the food on their table as it's assumed that eating animals were considered vital and therefore 'normal' in lower classes and no one seems to have questioned that. This I would argue can be seen as another dimension of colonial approach to the 'subaltern that's not allowed to speak' or stories and experiences are overlooked and not recorded; the assumption of taking what's been tailored for them without any practical or affective dissent.

Putting the lack of research on the affective situation of the common people versus animals and how religious advocacy and economics shaped the psyche of the Varna in India to one side, there's an important dimension to the development of vegetarianism in India and then in the world, which is colonialism. Keeping in mind that Hinduism was built after the Aryan invasion of India through the appropriation of traditional religious practices such as food, one can say there seems to be a colonial link in the adoption of vegetarianism too. This is also the case in the reappearance of vegetarianism after a long time since Ancient Greek in the West in early 16th century.

1.2. VEGETARIANISM IN THE WEST AS A COLONIAL IMPORT

As with India, and Ancient Greek, it again seems to be religion that decides what is food and not in the West too. The Bible clearly states that Adam and Eve lived on a plant based diet, in harmony with other animals like themselves without hurting each other: 'Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed ... and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat' (Genesis 1:29). Nevertheless, after the world was destroyed in Noah's flood and rebuilt again, there's a change in God's discourse: 'The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into

your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things' (Genesis 9:2–3), ("Genesis 9:2 The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands.", 2017). This is a paradigm shift in the Bible that seemed to be giving Christianity the right to conquer and colonize from then on. They have earned the right to dominate all living beings and now it's up to them to let them live or die. Similar approaches to animals are visible in other celestial religions too. Most of the time eating non-human animals is allowed because God has created them for human beings and at the lower part of the hierarchical pyramid of living beings.

That in mind there emerged a movement called 'Prelapsarianism' a small group within the Quakers Christian community of Europe in the early 17th century of which the name was adopted as a reference to the harmonious and peaceful state Adam and Eve was in in Eden before their 'lapse' in Paradise. These people who called themselves Prelapsarians were wishing to reach that pure state in Heaven before killing other animals was 'allowed' after the fall on earth. (Stuart 2008). After the great sin, the fall from Heaven meant all kinds of impurity and tyranny for these people. It meant the entrance of the idea of 'sin'. Sharing a similar approach with Protestant thought, they believed one should engage in personal and cosmic purification in order to restore the atmosphere before the fall and "also shared the belief that it was each individual's mission and responsibility to contribute to the process of redemption" (Kroll, Ashcraft & Zagorin, 2008: 46). Here we see again the idea of getting closer to a pure state in the avoiding of eating meat of non-human animals. These created a fraction within the religious community: Those who thought animals were created for people and those who thought people should avoid hurting other animals because Adam and Eve lived in harmony with them so. While accepting the superiority of human beings over other creatures as written in the Bible,

Prelapsarians were in favor of a 'peaceful and kind domination' over the earth suggesting a new moral ground.

Unsurprisingly the supporters of this idea were mostly from educated side of the society, including intellectuals and writers, again people with certain access to certain forms of thought and particular cultural capitals. As Tristram Stuart points out "Revolutionaries attacked the bloodthirsty luxury of mainstream culture; demographers accused the meat industry of wasting resources which could otherwise be used to feed people; anatomists claimed that human intestines were not equipped to digest meat, and travelers to the East presented India as a peaceful alternative to the rapacity of the West." (Stuart, 2008: 25) These so called travelers happened to 'visit' India, on a mission during the colonialism of India by Britain in 17th century after the construction of British East India Company. (Young, 2016).

The mission in India was motivated by trade and consequently embraced all sorts of practices that maintained this economical exploitation possible, including the whitewashing of culture through Western ideas and Christian missionaries. The already reemerging idea of a pure and superior soul within the European elite in the West was strengthened with the encounter of Hinduism ideas of abstaining from meat.

One could argue that the practice of abstaining from meat was responsive to the post Protestant revolution life in Europe in which the world was 'disenchanted' as Weber suggested. Although highly promoted in religious circles, staying away from meat hence becoming pure, healthy and awake can be argued to have contributed to the idea of a community that favored working long hours and being useful. This is further supported by the fact that the evangelicalism which was born out of the Protestant movement that began in Britain in the 1730s also contributed in the expanding of vegetarianism too. Actually there are sources that show that the formation of the first ever vegetarian NGO, the Vegetarian Society in England coincides with the time that evangelists were most active in 1850s

(Miller, 2011). It should be no coincidence in the sense that Vegetarian Society used Biblical quotes in their promotion of a meat free diet, referring mostly to that of ‘uncontaminated’ state Adam and Eve were in Eden before the fall (Miller, 2011).

The revival of vegetarianism after the import of ideas from India not only is a result of religion but other factors too. Health and moral questions regarding consuming animals accompanied the vegetarian discourse within these period and first theories that questioned the ethical approach to animals emerged around this time in Europe. I will focus on the emerging theories on animal rights in Western philosophy in Chapter 2.

The entrance in India’s cultural history and the astonishment with its culture seems to have bigger implications in Western society than it’s comprehended. While the idea of purity through abstaining from meat contributed into the Protestant ideals to create a purer society, specific Europeans intended to saw The Aryans who invaded India back in 1500 BC as the source of the European race; a belief which was theorized under the name of ‘The Fulfillment Theology’ around 19th century by a Scottish Missionary J. N. Farquhar in his book called “The Crown of Hinduism”. According to this theory, ‘Christ was the friend’ of not only Christians but also the Hindu too, so Christianity was there to fulfill other religions, Hinduism in particular (Farquhar, 1915). It can be argued that this theory was used as an excuse to exploit and convert ‘the Orient’ better, attempting to invite those people to take part in the power willingly through conversion. Farquhar suggested that Christianity and Hinduism had many similarities hence Christianity could have been the fulfilment of the ancient Aryan Hinduism so a conversion would not only be natural but better. This theory clearly drew some parallels between the Aryan race and the European race, so ideas that were connected to the traditions of Hinduism, such as abstaining from meat and meditation were one of the first things to be appropriated by the West.

The political transformation of this belief had ghastly consequences. The Nazi's in early 20th century was obsessed with the Aryan race and the equation of the idea of purity with the race itself was the major reason behind their ambition to create a 'Master race' that dominated the world. The road to purity meant the heavy policing of bodies; disabled, sick and old bodies as well as Jews, were first that needed to be gotten rid of in order to maintain that supposed pure Aryan race. Apart from the Jews, sick and disabled people were considered contaminated, broken, unhealthy, and wrong hence imperfect/impure, and were subjected to certain extermination procedures in Nazi Germany. Having drawn influence and 'inspiration' from the Eugenics movement that was fairly popular in late 19th and early 20th century (Bloch, 1986) and also Darwinism and Sir Francis Galton's Social Darwinism theory, Nazi administration aimed the controlling and prevention of the reproduction of undesirable races or 'citizens' through certain social propaganda and scientific procedures (Lindert, Stein, Guggenheim, Jaakkola & Strous, 2012). Through using the discourse of scientific knowledge and scientific development, the idea of health was promoted. Food in that sense became somewhat like 'medicine' to sustain a healthy body. In his book, 'Racial Hygiene; Medicine under the Nazis', Robert Proctor tells how unwanted subjects were prevented from accessing certain food (such as whole-grain bread) and ultimately were excluded from the Nazi natural health movement (abstaining from meat as well as alcohol and smoking) (Proctor, 1988).

Pureness of the soul meant the purity of the body as in Ancient Aryan belief so what a person should put inside his/her body was also important. Adolf Hitler himself is known to be an occasional vegetarian. Today people who are associated with Neo Nazism and are in support of white supremacy also tend to follow meat free diets as well ("Why So Many White Supremacists Are into Veganism", 2017). Some scholars argue that as well as the idea of staying pure and drawing a line between the health and the unhealthy hence the undesirable and the desirable 'master' race, Nazi's appropriation of a vegetarian diet had to do with other reasons as well. In their paper titled 'Understanding Nazi Animal Protection and

the Holocaust', Arnold Arluke and Boria Sax argue that 'The Nazis abolished moral distinctions between animals and people by viewing people as animals. The result was that animals could be considered higher than some people'' (Sax and Arluke, 1992). Recognizing the moral status of animals thus equalizing their moral worth with people meant that some people could be evaluated as having less moral qualities than animals so that the National Socialists in Germany would rationalize their crimes against Jews and other morally 'less worth people' (Sax and Arluke, 1992) through the established moral righteousness of their acts.

The view that the Nazis justified their extermination of certain people through downgrading their moral worth to animals' can be challenged through the argument made by Paul Bloom in his article for the New Yorker titled 'The Root of All Cruelty'. He argues when a group of people are subjected to punishment through equalization/reduction of their moral worth with animals, this act of punishment on a psychological level, relies on the idea that it is very well recognized that these people are not animals hence the punishment actually fulfils itself through actual humiliation: "Moral violence, whether reflected in legal sanctions, the killing of enemy soldiers in war, or punishing someone for an ethical transgression, is motivated by the recognition that its victim is a moral agent, someone fully human" (Bloom, 2017). He drives his argument from contemporary philosopher Kate Manne's ideas on misogyny (Manne, 2017) when saying "the aggressions licensed by moral entitlement, the veneer of bad faith: those things are evident in a wide range of phenomena, from slaveholders' religion-tinctured justifications to the Nazi bureaucrats' squeamishness about naming the activity they were organizing, neither of which would have been necessary if the oppressors were really convinced that their victims were beasts" (Bloom, 2017).

This somehow dirty chronological history of abstaining from meat is almost exclusively about the strange obsession of purity; mostly appropriated by the privileged parts of society to be imposed on lower classes as a domination

apparatus in order to establish their status as the decider class. But the idea of purity goes on about another direction too. The idea of being awake and ‘uncontaminated’ through abstaining from meat resonated with many subcultures and activist circles in the world throughout history. Anarchist movement for instance was one of the first political movement from the left ideology to have adopted a vegan diet and rejected animal use in all forms. Later in mid 1970s and all throughout 1980’s and 1990s the punk/hardcore music scene in the world saw the emergence of a trend under the name of ‘straight-edgism’; which meant no alcohol, no smoking and no animal use. These were all anti-establishment subculture movements which mostly included young people and had received feedback from all over the world. The idea of staying ‘pure’ is still here but in a twisted way: Staying pure meant mostly resisting to the norms and not doing what the government and the majority of society told you to do so. As well as animal exploitation, these movements also rejected other oppression forms such as homophobia, misogyny, fascism, racism too. So it can be argued that while vegetarianism has strong historical ties to the status quo, on the other hand it was also adopted, subverted some might argue, by certain minority groups from a not very ‘practical’ but rather an ethical, transformative also resisting position.

CHAPTER 2

THE QUESTIONS OF THE RIGHTS OF ANIMALS AND THE BIRTH OF VEGANISM

As with the idea of using nonhuman animals as resources became a norm through traditions of everyday life of human societies, so did emerge questions and questionings too, as to how ethical it was to use animals for the benefit of human beings and was it possible to imagine a life without this?

After vegetarianism was widespread first in Britain through the missionary work in India in the form of the idea of purity; Western philosophers started to contemplate and write about people’s relationship with animals which included the ethical side of consuming animals as well around early 18th century. Although

the relationship between humans and nonhuman animals are being questioned and discussed by many in various different fields in various geographies, be it philosophy or literature since those times, the emergence of veganism as a diet is thought to have corresponded to early 20th century. The idea of stopping the using of animals completely were being discussed in the forums of the Vegetarian Messenger, the bi-monthly magazine that was being published by the Vegetarian Society (Leneman, 1999). A vegan cook-book by Rupert H. Wheldon called 'No Animal Food' was published in 1910, which is now believed to be the first ever vegan book. An English activist and a conscientious objector named Donald Watson ("Donald Watson", 2017) has come up with the title 'vegan' that was to call people who chose a lifestyle that did not include the consumption of animals in any way in 1944. Around that period, vegetarianism was around to be recognized *as a dietary choice* for a while rather than a moral obligation since the Protestant missionaries work somewhat faded. Some very few people that rejected eating not only the meat but also the dairy that came from animals and other byproducts such as leather, wool, etc. did not have a category of their own. They were simply called as 'non-dairy vegetarians'. After some debate among their own, Donald Watson and his friends settled on the word 'vegan' as a new identity category that liberated them from the limited definition of 'non-dairy vegetarianism' and was more of an accurate way of defining their behavior towards consuming nonhuman animals. Following the footsteps of the Vegetarian Society, Watson also gave this name to his newly formed civil society/club 'the Vegan Society' which is now known as the first ever veganism related civil organization. The first Vegan Society newsletter included these words written by Watson himself: "The unquestionable cruelty associated with the production of dairy produce, has made it clear that lacto-vegetarianism is but a half-way house between flesh-eating and a truly humane, civilized diet, and we think, therefore, that during our life on earth we should try to evolve sufficiently to make the 'full journey'". ("Donald Watson", 2017).

Although the definition of veganism was roughly made then, the concept of ‘veganism’ as we know today has been fully defined by Leslie J. Cross from the organization in 1949 as “to seek an end to the use of animals by man for food, commodities, work, hunting, vivisection, and by all other uses involving exploitation of animal life by man”. Later in 1979, when Vegan Society registered as an official charity, the definition was altered as “a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and *cruelty* to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of *humans, animals and the environment*. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.” (“History”. *The Vegan Society*. N. p., 2017. Web. 1 Apr. 2017.) Seemingly, Vegan Society did not use any religious arguments when advocating veganism as Vegetarian Society did. They mostly focused on the ethical side of promoting a plant based diet, including issues such as environmentalism as well as animals too. This may have to do with the emerging theories and activism on animal rights of the period.

The concept of veganism has since been used, altered, assigned to different trends in various ways but one can say, the definition made by the Vegan Society still keeps its relevancy and stands as the common ground as the core definition of veganism: In a nutshell, veganism means the rejection of using nonhuman animals by humans as resources.

2.1. ANIMAL RIGHTS IN THE WESTERN WORLD

After a long intro and discussion about the role status groups, colonialism and religion played in human’s relationship with nonhuman animals on grounds of food in particular, the reason I am sparing a whole chapter to Western theories on animal rights is because contemporary animal rights activism of today seems to be built mainly upon these theories. Built upon a colonial background and speaking

out from a Western context, these theories might be argued to have brought with themselves certain forms of embedded oppression and colonial affects but then again this also suggests an opportunity to open to discussion the intersected nature of relationality.

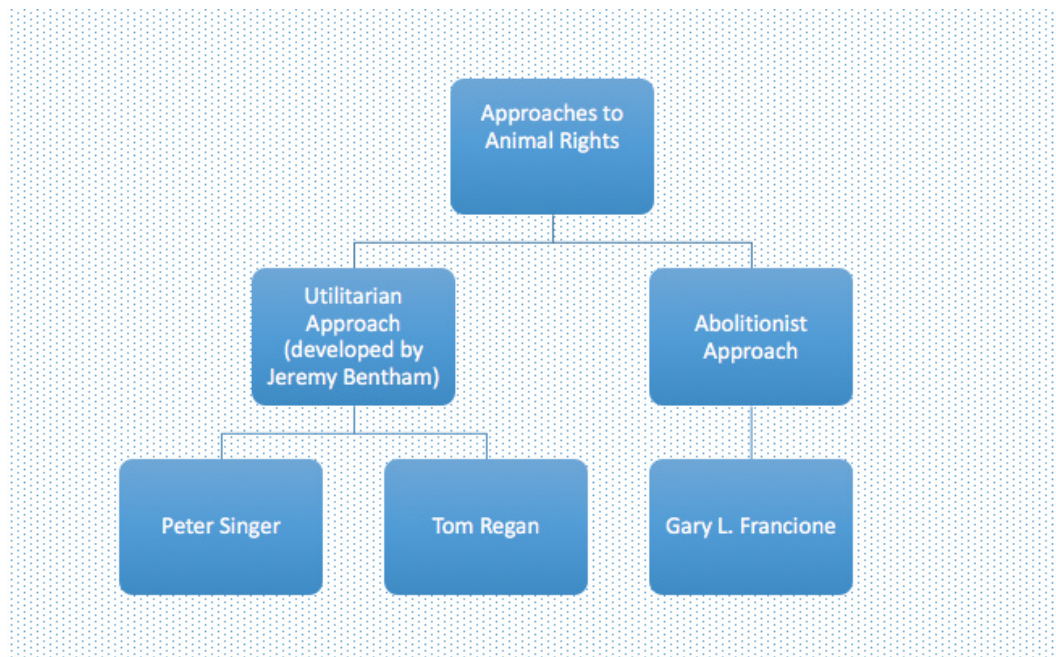
As I have discussed, from a bird's view position, societies' approach to animals was basically altered and 'developed' mostly due to religious concerns be it celestial or not. When zoomed, it also showed complex power relations embedded in the stratification of people as groups within these societies and in their interaction with nonhuman animals too. West's colonial past marks a huge importance on the course of history and as with every little area it seeped it, animal rights had its share from this aspect too. Keeping in mind this intertwining characteristic of geographies through cultural colonization, it becomes harder to draw a certain division line between the East and the West. The idea of vegetarianism as a moral duty in the West was definitely a colonial import since it was appropriated as an apparatus to influence people and underline the distinctive qualities of certain classes through the policing of bodies with the idea of purity by the status quo. That said, since nonhuman animals were used as food by people since the Paleolithic age, it would not be wrong to argue that the relationship between humans and nonhumans have been occupying the human mind at various areas on earth at certain levels for a long time.

As in with Ancient India, in Ancient Greek too, food was considered very important and taking good care of the body through a diet was a common practice again within the upper classes. One of the first written discussions about eating animals from Ancient Greek is from as early as 500 BC, from philosopher Pythagoras' writings which suggested that it was not right to eat meat since 'he believed that the human souls were transmigrated into nonhuman animals after death' (DeMello, 2012: 35). Pythagoras himself developed this idea from the time he lived in Egypt during the Persian invasion of Egypt and 'learnt secret Magian rites, which involved ritual cleansing through drugs and herbs'' (Spencer, 1996:

40). The purification of the soul meant no meat. Soon after he returned to the Island of Samos, Pythagoras and his friends formed a heteric like group in which they practiced Pythagoras's newly learnt ways of ascetics which involved meditation and abstaining from meat.

The main idea here has still got to do with religion and protection of the holy state of human beings' souls after death, meaning to stay pure, hence is in favor of human beings rather than animals. As a matter of fact, not only the earlier writings on animals but also contemporary mainstream approach to animals mostly share this point of view despite small differences and carry on the legacy of the 'pureness' narrative in various ways, (I would give the example of the usage of words like 'compassion', 'cruelty free', 'good' etc., which underline what becomes of the human condition in choosing a meatless lifestyle) while at the same time talking about animal rights. This approach can be argued to have taken its roots from and based on the long Western tradition and thought, which is in early 18th century had been theorized in detail and this time inclusive of animals, by philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham under the title of 'utilitarianism.' The two different approaches, the utilitarian and the abolitionist approach to animal rights form the basis of today's prominent animal rights activism.

Table 1: Dominant Approaches to Animal Rights



2.1.1. Bentham's Utilitarianism

Today, animal rights activists recognize Jeremy Bentham as one of the first people who wrote about animals through an ethical point of view. In his book *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* which was published in 1789, Bentham argued that an action's moral worth is determined by its outcome, that is its utility. Happiness for Bentham meant pleasure which can be described by the absence of pain. This means that actions are considered right or wrong depending on their superiority/inferiority to other actions which is decided by the amount of pleasure they bring. He also applied this point of view to the treatment of animals too. Accepting animals were sentient beings who could feel pain, joy and happiness, he included them in his idea of utilitarian action. The ground rule for an ethical behavior towards living beings for Bentham was whether one could feel pain or not. He suggested that rather than the ability to reason, the ability to suffer should be counted as the moral red line when treating humans and animals alike. The reason he found rationality as the main criterion of moral concern irrelevant was the presence of babies and mentally disabled people and our still ethical attitude towards them. Here it's obvious that there's a widening of the

ethical stand through including every being who can feel pain but still as it limits this world for beings who can feel pain, this view happens to create another hierarchical regulation in the world of living beings: Those who can feel pain and those who cannot. There's a certain human centered quality here too as it categorizes the pain that people recognize and this recognition comes firstly through science and through the observation of the world as it was then; which was a world in which slavery was considered natural and also legal. Bentham was influenced by the tragedy of the slave society he was a part of. His theories mostly derived from what he had witnessed in his time. For instance, in 1789 he wrote about the slaves in the French West Indies regarding the limited degree of legal protection they have received:

“The day has been, I am sad to say in many places it is not yet past, in which the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated by the law exactly upon the same footing, as, in England for example, the inferior races of animals are still. The day may come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may one day come to be recognised that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason or perhaps the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog, is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day or a week or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? the question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer? Why should the law refuse its protection to any sensitive being? The time will come when humanity will extend its mantle over everything which breathes...” (quoted in Fitzpatrick, 1988).

Bentham's ideas are considered very important in animal rights literature since he was the first Western philosopher to suggest that the ground rule for including living beings in a society's ethical world was if they were capable of suffering or not and hence animals deserved ethical treatment as well as human beings. The fact that he was making this observation in a society of which some humans were being considered as animals hence treated likewise comes up as a bitter irony. From the light of what I have discussed in terms of the emergence of the idea of the ideal human that is pure, uncontaminated and ethical as in always transforming, it can be argued that Bentham was operating inside "one of the organizing narratives of Western thought and the institutions it has shaped: Humanism and the idea that human beings are at the core of the social and cultural order" (Deckha, 2010: 28) which is actually exclusive of certain humans in its main understanding. Deckha also points out that this humanism had received critique later in theory and social movements "on the failure of its promise of universal equal treatment and dignity for all human beings" and at an attempt for redemption or fixing itself, had widened the spectrum as to be inclusive of both humans and what's considered as 'subhumans' before: Jews, Black people and lately nonhuman animals too. Bentham's remark that "The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor" therefore, may be argued to be speaking inside that self-regulating mechanism of the humanist movement which paradoxically is both the creator and the willing 'destroyer' of itself; contributing into the contemporary white dominant ethical talk too which also includes today's Western vegan narrative which revolves around the sustainment of the cruelty free, good person.

2.1.2. Peter Singer and Speciesism

Contemporary thinker Peter Singer and the related animal welfare movement is hugely inspired by Bentham's theories. In his book *Animal Liberation*, published in 1975, Singer replaces the idea of pleasure of Bentham with 'best interests' of individuals. Rather than calculating pleasure over pain as Bentham did, Singer suggests we should consider what is the best interest for of the greatest number. This leads to the concept what Singer calls as 'preference utilitarianism' (Singer, 1993) meaning we ought to value the preferences of one's own life when making decisions and this includes some nonhuman animals too, because some animals have the capacity to show their preferences. Through a Kantian approach, by observing the greatest number of people who show certain preferences over certain conditions, Singer argues, we are able to make universalizations. This equation suggests that as long as animals do not suffer, it can be OK to kill them for the best interest of the greatest number. This approach is known as animal welfare approach and is the most popular trend in animal rights related movements with NGOs such as Greenpeace and even PETA promoting it (in Turkey we can count 'Seninki Kaç Santim?' campaign by Greenpeace which protests against the hunting of premature fish in Turkey's seas.)

In animal rights movement, Singer's ideas have resonated with the 'welfare trend' which favors pleasure over pain. However as much as this trend seems to be protecting animals from pain, it actually favors some animals more than others by putting forward the 'preference' detail. His idea that some animals have preferences implies a hierarchy based on intelligence; differing from Bentham's hierarchy based on pain. Contemporary animal welfarists believe that animals matter but they also believe that since it's impossible to change what the majority thinks and behaves in an animal-consuming world immediately, it can be OK to use animals as resources but we have to be careful while using them, paying attention to their well-being and making sure they don't suffer unless needed through promoting organic animal agriculture, free range meat production etc.

As well as being the flag carrier of animal welfare movement, Singer is also responsible for spreading the use of one of the most important concepts in animal rights movement: Speciesism. Originally coined by British psychologist Richard D. Ryder, speciesism means ‘discrimination on the grounds of species’. In his essay, "Experiments on Animals," in *Animals, Men and Morals* (1971), Ryder wrote:

“In as much as both "race" and "species" are vague terms used in the classification of living creatures according, largely, to physical appearance, an analogy can be made between them. Discrimination on grounds of race, although most universally condoned two centuries ago, is now widely condemned. Similarly, it may come to pass that enlightened minds may one day abhor "speciesism" as much as they now detest "racism." The illogicality in both forms of prejudice is of an identical sort. If it is accepted as morally wrong to deliberately inflict suffering upon innocent human creatures, then it is only logical to also regard it as wrong to inflict suffering on innocent individuals of other species. ... The time has come to act upon this logic.”

Peter Singer used this term in his *Animal Liberation* book frequently, in order to underline that it's wrong to violate animals' rights to avoid suffering and draw connections between different forms of oppression and discrimination. Today this term is very popular within anti-discriminative social organizations and is being used next to terms like homophobia, sexism, agism, ablism etc. even those organizations do not necessarily advocate veganism and/or vegetarianism.

2.1.3. Tom Regan and the Subject-of-a-Life

One other very important work on animal rights belongs to Tom Regan. Influenced by Kant's arguments on morals, Regan differs from the aforementioned welfarist theoreticians. He argues that every living being with

cognitive and experiential capacities have inherent values; but unlike Kant, he doesn't believe that this inherent value is correlated with being rational. Kant believes that every rational being that has the capacity of realizing their own rationality hence is able to make rational decisions have an inherent moral value, thus are moral agents (Kant & Guyer, 2009). This approach automatically excludes animals which are known to be irrational creatures (in human terms). According to Kant it is still wrong to misbehave to animals but only because being mean to animals would eventually result in being mean towards other human beings too, thus animals have only indirect moral values. Having no inherent moral values, animals are open to be used by others who have inherent values. Moral agents, people in this case, get to decide what to do with animals, whether respect or ignore them. Deckha argues that this discourse is still relevant in today's anti-violence and animal rights movements and it hints at a "concern with violence against humans and how to eliminate it and make humans less vulnerable" (Deckha, 2010: 29). She argues that the discussions around the idea of humanity and what it means to be a human always end up as the affirmations of the human dignity "through articulation of what it means to be animal" and therefore "The humanist paradigm of anti-violence discourse thus does not typically examine the human/nonhuman boundary, but often fortifies it" (Deckha, 2010: 29). As a society which is arguably built on Western humanism and organized around Kantian ethics of the Enlightenment, it can be suggested that even (or especially) an updated version of humanism therefore emerges as a perpetuator of violence through the idea of 'the subhuman' or nonhuman itself.

Regan opposes this idea and building on Jeremy Bentham's suggestions he argues that the ground rule to have an inherent value cannot be the rational capacity but the ability to feel pain; after all, not every human being is necessarily 'rational' (babies, people with mental disabilities etc.) What's important here is that we all value our lives. This is what he calls as being the 'subject-of-a-life' (Regan, 1983). He criticizes Kant for sparing moral statuses for only rational agents and

suggests that every being that is the subject of life and their life matters to them should be considered moral subjects as well.

2.1.4. Gary L. Francione and the Abolitionist Approach

All of the approaches to animal rights above from Bentham, Singer and Regan, though differing in various parts from each other, share one important key standing point: Their theories all favor a moral hierarchy and place human animals on the top of this hierarchical pyramid hence can be seen sharing the welfarist view when it comes to animal rights.

Contemporary academician/lawyer and activist Gary Francione's abolitionist approach to animal rights, differs from the above approaches in fundamental ways. Francione adopts crucial concepts from all the names I mentioned till now from Bentham to Regan but re-evaluates them in an argument that refutes a moral hierarchy between sentient beings. As with Reagan, Francione also believes that the only criteria for having a moral status is the capacity to feel pain and pleasure and that moral values are inherent to all beings that have the capacity to experience life. He argues that the only reason we respect a subject's right to live is that we share that inherent moral value with them because as sentient beings ourselves we know about the experience of suffering and how one benefits from avoiding suffering and ultimately dying (Francione, 2000). It matters as much to an animal not to be killed as it matters to a human being. Being a rational, intelligent being plays no role in having an inherent moral value according to Francione. His approach is called the Abolitionist Approach because he suggests that the only way to get out of this strongly established moral hierarchy and talk about real animal rights is the abolition of the law system that defines animals as properties. He argues that as long as we keep these laws that classify animals as legal properties, we will never be able to see them as sentient beings with real inherent values that demand respect.

From a distant perspective, Francione's approach demands a bigger structural change in the social order than the previous theories especially in the economic strata. After all animal subordination is almost as old as the emergence of civilization. Therefore, it is criticized for being a 'totalizing' approach that does not have a 'realistic' target thus failing to be efficient. But the followers of this approach suggest that a structural change is what we need in the first place because if we continue to sustain animal subordination that comes from this hierarchical contract that humans signed with animals in the name of animals themselves, we will never be able to talk about a real change in our behavior towards animals. According to Abolitionists what needs to be changed is a mutual process, laws that define animals as properties should change as well as the idea of animals constructed in human beings' minds as 'properties' needs to be changed too. It just doesn't matter how good you behave to animals, as long as they are considered as properties, they will be seen as subordinate to human beings and this will forever prevent to see other forms of knowledge or experience we might have about animals hence reimagine a world where we could talk about animal rights and liberation.

One of the main differences between Francione's abolitionist approach and the welfarist model that's based on Bentham's utilitarianism idea, is that the only theory which advocates veganism as its main tool is the abolitionist approach. As I have mentioned, the welfarist movement inherently assumes a hierarchical difference between humans and animals in a moral sense, their wellbeing, their pleasure and pain is above other sentient creatures that have less moral value. This makes a clear difference in the way these approaches showcase themselves as activism too.

2.2. CONTEMPORARY ANIMAL RIGHT MOVEMENTS

Today although activism on animal rights are being realized upon the two basic aforementioned theories, the animal welfarist (also known as the utilitarian) and the abolitionist approach, in the West, it's obvious that the welfarist approach is the most popular one. If we think that animals were constructed as the ultimate other within human civilization which is based mostly on rationality and reason and language, lacking from all of the above, nonhuman animals were and still are being considered as inferior to human beings. That said, the theories of 'sentience' are being received with increasing interest as well. With online socializing growing larger and making it possible to interact with happenings from various places in the world possible, the question of animals is becoming one hot topic. One of the most popular things to do online nowadays is to share pictures of cute cats and dogs, owning a pet is almost applauded everywhere and there are more and more people interested in volunteering to work in animal shelters. Online socializing through animals seems to have replaced the 'socializing through pet walking'. People 'like' and/or 'comment on' pictures of others that show a warm hug with a pet or share notifications of 'lost pets' while at the same time condemning the violence towards animals through online petitions and comments.

Apart from increased online interest to certain nonhuman animals, animal rights activism is also on the rise in the world with new approaches coming to the foreground lately. In popular world, animal activism is represented with two major activist groups: Animal Liberation Front- ALF and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, also commonly known as PETA.

2.2.1. ALF (Animal Liberation Front)

Animal Liberation Front is a group which emerged in early 70s, that uses direct action in their activism which includes breaking into animal farms without permission, destroying facilities, 'freeing' animals from their cages, taking pictures of slaughterhouses and spreading them through social and printed media, using images which usually include blood, dead animals and beating of the

animals in their activism. Because of their violent approach, ALF is considered as a terrorist group in United States, because of their 'illegal' and violent methods consistent with the definition of what a terrorist act is. ALF is also considered within what FBI defines as eco-terrorism: "...the use or threatened use of violence of a criminal nature against innocent victims or property by an environmentally-oriented, subnational group for environmental-political reasons, or aimed at an audience beyond the target, often of a symbolic nature." (Jarboe, 2002) ALF's violent direct attacks on animal farms and their appropriation of 'gerilla' methods such as wearing snow masks and breaking into buildings without permission, has indirect effects on people who also are working at the shelters. They might end up having to work harder in order to reorganize the place for extra hours and most of time they are stigmatized for 'choosing' to work at such a place which behaves badly to animals.

ALF's actions are also criticized for praising heroism and focusing on the just one, overt part of the problem by other animal rights activists such as the Abolitionists who argue that as long as the core of the problem, the internalized and structured idea that defines animals as 'properties' is not challenged, these kind of 'superficial and human centered' activism will never be successful. Abolitionists label this kind of activism as 'single-issue campaigns'. According to Gary L. Francione, "a single-issue campaign involves identifying some particular use of animals or some form of treatment and making that the object of a campaign to end the use or modify the treatment. The problem of a single-issue campaign is that it presents some particular use or treatment as morally distinguishable from other forms of use or treatment and by doing so explicitly or implicitly suggests that other forms of exploitation are morally less problematic" (Francione, 2017). Among examples of such campaigns are protests that confront a group of people that wear leather or fur, the protests against hunting or protests that focus a nation or ethnicity, like in Sacrifice Holiday in Muslim countries and the Yulin Festival in China which involves eating dog meat. Recent protests against horse carriages in İstanbul's Prince's Islands can also be counted as an

example to a single-issue campaign. Since these protest only focus on specific outcomes of a long tradition of animal use, abolitionists think they are far from being successful on the side of animals and on the contrary can contribute into subtle forms of racism, Islamophobia and sexism. Take for example the Sacrifice Holiday in which Muslims kill animals as a token of their faith in Allah and distribute the animals' meat to poor people as a symbol of their good intentions and belief in peace and brotherhood in the world. Protests that target this Muslim holiday in particular have the danger to contribute into the hate discourse against the Muslim world, through implying what these people are doing is uncivilized and savage. By shifting the focus from the behavior that we feel is 'wrong' unto the group or the ethnicity itself, these kinds of protests narrow down the problem to an issue that belongs to 'one certain group', thus at the same time bringing certain people under spotlight and letting the real objects of the problem, the animals be ignored. This also, I argue, contributes into the binary way of seeing life and getting rid of the responsibility we all share by focusing on certain ways and certain people thus creating a us/them hence a good/the bad people discourse. Also as with ALF's violent attacks on animal farms, these type of protests that targets certain actions and certain people who are doing the action tend to ignore other types of oppression that are embedded in these types of reaction such as class, gender and education. Since animal use is not 'specific' to a certain geography or a religion or an ethnicity, since animal use is the one common certain practice that everyone in the world contributes one way or another, it's not possible to isolate oneself from it through these kinds of actions and/or protests.

2.2.2. PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)

When talking about animal activism, another popular name comes up other than ALF, namely PETA. Founded in early 80s, PETA is today the largest animal rights related non-governmental organization with more than 6.5 millions of members and supporters ("About PETA", 2017). The organization concentrates

on four different areas with their activism: Food industry, clothing, animal testing and animal use in the entertainment industry. One of the reasons why PETA is the most known animal rights related NGO is this widespread activism they practice. The organization started as a vegan institution but now it seemingly advocates veganism in order to decrease animal use but not as a fundamental rule. They would also approve of humane killing of animals and better slaughterhouse regulations in the food industry. These specific properties make PETA a welfarist group which also seem to be considering that the more visibility is better when it comes to addressing animal rights so that they use methods as TV and print advertisements and use celebrities within their campaigns believing the power of the potential positive influence they will bring.

Spanning such a wider audience requires a more flexible view on animal rights and PETA usually is criticized with its take on questionable campaigns mostly on grounds that are related to violence (though not as direct as ALF since it's a legal NGO whereas ALF considers itself to be an anarchic movement), gender and race. They are famous for using the female body almost in all of their campaigns, they organize 'single issue protests' such as anti-fur campaigns which directly targets women and has sexist and agist undertones.

For example, in one of its latest on field campaigns during Wimbledon Championships 2017 in England, PETA hired dozens of young women to deliver free 'vegan cream' to the audience of the games. These women wore 'provocative sexy clothes' like 70's style bikinis and high heeled red shoes and were wearing heavy makeup while carrying banners that read 'Serving Vegan Cream' and 'Beat the Heat with Dairy-free Treats' ("Animal rights charity PETA is slammed for '70s-style sexism'", 2017). This campaign drew angry comments from both vegan and non-vegan people on social and printed media, people accusing PETA to be behaving in a misogynistic way. In fact, PETA defends itself for using such images on grounds that it is 'playing on the common people' in order to reach a wider crowd and create awareness but similar with the ALF case that tends to

oversee particular embedded discrimination forms that is innate to their activism, PETA is falling short to make a connection with the intertwining discriminations buried in their campaigns which according to many vegan activists, especially Abolitionists, is doing more harm than good to the animal rights movement because they seem like they don't care about the sexism in the world and on the contrary rather normalizing and reproducing it through such campaigns.

Carol J. Adams argues that animal bodies are objectified as female bodies and draws connections with feminism and animal rights in her book *Sexual Politics of Meat* (Adams, 1999). She claims that meat eating is designed to be a masculine practice by the patriarchy and draws parallels with meat eating and patriarchy and suggests that every person who calls themselves feminists, should also be 'vegetarians' as well. She argues that "gender inequality is built into the species inequality that meat eating proclaims, because for most cultures obtaining meat was performed by men. Meat was a valuable economic commodity; those who controlled this commodity achieved power. If men were the hunters, then the control of this economic resource was in their hands" (Adams, 1999: 58). PETA seems to be operating within this historicity which Adams argued. For Adams meat consuming today is sponsored through advertisements with images and slogans that make references to women's bodies. PETA does that too and seems to be operating within the patriarchal world, still objectifying female bodies. This is a clear example to how different types of oppression manifests itself through the practice of activism.

2.2.3. Vegan Abolitionists

With their focus on numbers (the quantity of animals rescued from farms, the quantity of people a campaign reaches however problematic its method can be) both ALF and PETA can be evaluated as welfarist hence utilitarian movements resonating with Peter Singer's ideas. Not necessarily promoting veganism, these types of utilitarian campaigns seem to see a vegan world as a 'utopia', that would

not come in the near future; a belief which holds the center of criticism for abolitionist vegans who put veganism as the focus of their animal rights activism.

Vegan abolitionists on the other hand believe in nonviolent activism, and support ‘change through education’ and say that the only way to a world without animal use is to ‘go vegan and educate others’ (Francione, 2000). One of their most used activist practice is the ‘vegan stand’ in which abolitionist vegans put up stands in various places with flyers that have information about veganism and the abolitionist vegan theory and encourage people to ask themselves questions about veganism. They tend to draw attention without being aggressive but at the same time being consistent with their theory. They are highly critical of welfarist movements and argue for ‘an unapologetic vegan perspective’, claiming that the only way animals could be respected for their inherent moral value is to go vegan. Whereas animal welfarists focus on words like ‘compassion’ towards animals and ‘cruelty free food’ when talking about vegan meals, abolitionists stand in a more certain position that is related to Kantian understanding of ‘the universality of morals’. They argue that if causing pain to cats or dogs is not acceptable then it’s not acceptable to cause pain to every sentient animal.

Abolitionist approach to animal rights take its inspiration and its name from the anti slavery movement in the Unites States pointing out certain similarities between human and non human exploitation and “highlights the parallel between the two movements in that the systems of human and nonhuman animal slavery both commodify sentient beings and respect their interests only insofar as they are economically beneficial” (Wrenn, 2012: 440). It can be argued that this comparison is problematic on the grounds that it uses ‘race’ as a tool so recklessly in the name of abstraction that it fails to see the deeply racialized culture we are living in. This perspective then can be criticized for being white-normative and for speaking inside a flattened out narrative that tends to be erasive of certain overlapping forms of oppression.

One of the participants I have talked with, Aydinç an LGBTİ + activist who also sees himself more or less close to the abolitionist movement tells me that he himself does not like such analogies that compare two different oppressed groups when trying to promote veganism:

“Analoji yapmak benim doğru bulduğum bişey değil. Kesinlikle bunu kullanmamızı tasvip etmiyorum ama bunu ben de yapmaya devam ediyorum ne kadar istemesem de. Şöyle bir durum var: bundan önceki dönemlerde hani insan köleliği, kadınlık hakları işte lgbt+ hakları gibi şeyler toplumsal norm olarak şeydi. (...) O yüzden insanlara bunu anlatırken bu diğer konulardan örnekler veriyoruz, onlarla bağdaştırıyoruz çünkü onlar da yakın geçmişte toplumsal norm olarak yapılan, herkesin göz yumduğu, ses çıkarmadığı şeylerdi, artık değişti. Artık veganlıkla ilgili bazı şeylerin değişmesi lazım ama insanlar buna gözlerini kapatıyorlar seslerini çıkarmıyorlar, aynen 10 yıl önce trans cinayetlerine karşı ses çıkarmadıkları gibi şu anda da hayvanlara karşı yapılan bütün bu ayrımcılıklara karşı ses çıkarmıyorlar. Toplumsal olarak hayvan kullanmının yanlış olduğu anlaşıldığı noktada bu tür örnekler verilmeyecek bu (...) Şu anda bak çoğunluk veganlığı doğru buluyo, sen de bunu bu şekilde anlayabilirsin gibi daha dönüşerekten ve zaman içerisinde yok olacağını düşünüyorum ben ama çünkü hayvan kullanımının norm olmaması gerekiyo artık, ha bu ne zama ortadan kalkacak böyle örnekler verilmeyecek.”⁵

Still, it can be argued that types of analogies which equalize the moral worths of

⁵ “I don’t think its right to make analogies. I definitely don’t approve using them but I use them anyway even if I don’t want to. Before these times, human slavery, oppression of women and LGBTİ+ people were considered as norms. That’s why when we talk about this with people we give examples from other things, we connect with them because they were seen as norms to which everybody did not react against in recent past but it’s changed now. Somethings about veganism has to change now too but people close their eyes and keep silent about it just like they kept silent about the Trans murders 10 years ago, they don’t say anything about all the discrimination made against animals. When it’s understood that it’s wrong to use animals in society, there won’t be a need to give these examples (...) Right now the majority finds veganism right, you can understand too, I believe it will disappear in time but because animal use should not be a norm any more and when it’s gone, these kinds of examples won’t be needed.”

people with animal bring back certain affects for people such as Blacks and Jews who were subjected to heavy humiliation through being compared to animals and still can be offensive. Trying to provide an unhistorical, transcendental argument to this comparison in the name of abstraction and paradigm shift is questionable in its effort to bring political change since it tends to exclude certain groups through demanding objectivity from them hence could fall short in creating intersecting alliances.

CHAPTER 3

VEGANISM IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA

With the increasing visibility of vegans through social media and the emergence of different activism types other than ALF's and PETA's, veganism nowadays is being covered in mainstream media more than it has been before. Nevertheless, the way the media approaches veganism is still mostly through the diet hence the lifestyle way. Although some liberal Western media outputs such as The Guardian ("The Guardian view on veganism: high in moral fibre | Editorial", 2017) and CNN (Wang, 2017) started to cover veganism as a moral issue, in Turkey veganism seems to be represented separately from activism in the mainstream media, only being written about as a form of diet with health benefits if practiced correctly ("Vegan ılgınlığı büyüyor", 2017), or in some cases through a more negative approach such as with stories of vegan people who neglect the health of their children through making them eat a vegan diet by force ("Vegan ıftten bebeklerinin velayeti alındı", 2017). These type of news about neglectful vegans are being featured frequently in tabloid prints in Europe such as in Daily Mail too.

Other than these two types of articles, there's a third way that veganism finds its way onto the mainstream media: Through celebrities who, for different reasons such as health, environment or morals, chose to follow a vegan diet. Moral, health or environmental, whatever the motivation for going vegan may be for these

celebrities, the way they are presented in the mainstream media seems to have a lighter tone; tending to link this dietary choice to either ‘looking sexy’ (Selby, 2017), losing weight or anti-aging ("Scoop! Christie Brinkley, 61, Reveals Her Anti-Aging Secrets", 2017).

Here also emerges the gendered look on food and veganism. Laura Wright argues that a person who follows a vegan diet which does not include any animal food, is ‘a feminized body’ (Wright, 2015). Here purity of the body and soul in the Christian sense also becomes feminized but then contradictory to this acceptance, when the female vegan body is pregnant “it is policed as guilty of privation and denial, a danger to itself and its offspring both before and after birth” (Wright, 2015). The identification of veganism with femininity manifests itself on the media’s correlation of soy, one of the most used ingredients of a vegan diet, with femininity. Through articles that suggest soy causes the increase of the estrogen hormone in men ("Two Key Reasons that Make Soy Products Unhealthy for Male Hormonal Health", 2017) or to stories that link soy to women’s health ("How soy milk could help women with PCOS", 2017), men who identify as vegans are viewed less masculine than omnivore men (Ruby and Heine, 448). A similar take on soy which parallels its use with femininity can be traced in Turkish mainstream media as well ("Erkeğin düşmanı soya! | GAZETE VATAN", 2017), ("Soya kadın kalbini koruyor", 2017).

Also concepts such as nonviolence, kindness and compassion are strongly associated with femininity and today’s mainstream vegan discourse contributes into the emergence of this correlation through the self-representation of some of the vegan activism mostly through the welfarist movement such as with the advertisements of PETA that makes heavy use of words like ‘compassion’, ‘cruelty free’, ‘harmony’ etc. As a matter of fact, PETA mentions its own history as ‘a history of compassion’ ("About PETA", 2017).

Interestingly as I have outlined in Chapter 1, Hinduism’s and later Christianity’s

association of violence and contamination with meat and a plant based diet with purity is reminiscent of today's discourse of consuming food. Ben Anderson argues that neoliberalism can be understood with its close relation to affects (Anderson, 2016). Neoliberalism sustains itself with its ability to isolate the individual from the society and politics from everyday life mostly through the sublimation of moral based individual work such as charities and philanthropy etc. With concepts that target people's affective spaces through morals, I suggest veganism also opens up affective places in which neoliberal discourses can infiltrate into. If we are to define affect as 'an umbrella category that encompasses qualitatively distinct ways of organizing the 'feeling of existence'' (Anderson, 2016: 735), veganism emerges as a category with questions in regard to both feelings and existence, so both as an alternative way of organizing and also a potential area for neoliberal behavior to take root from.

Foucault argues neoliberalism is structured to grow through "a general regulation of society by the market" and to do this, it needs to create new markets from "previously non-economic domains" (Foucault, 2008). This of course includes people's personal lives and what is considered as personal choices. The discourse on veganism as a feminine way of existence that relates it to Yoga, good-heartedness, compassion and wellbeing as well as beauty, emerges from this affective space from which neoliberal appropriations bloom. Then a discourse starts to take shape around these concepts such as compassion, kindness and tolerance of which are appropriated by the neoliberal powers in order to legitimize the promotion of a promise. These words I argue, seem to be resonating with people's questions of existence; seemingly they are abstract and universal concepts that are free from the charge history brings, hence are easily isolated from politics and the practical life and can be comprehended as 'transcendental truths' that everybody should follow. Notice the coming together of earlier Aryan related ideas I mentioned in Chapter 1. The concept of purity and being able to stay uncontaminated are now affective ideas long appropriated and materialized by neoliberal discourses.

Abolitionist vegans think that the only way to resist against neoliberal discourses about veganism is to have a strong theory about veganism; veganism as praxis (action that is linked to certain values and is informed). In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire argues that “if action is emphasized exclusively, to the detriment of reflection, the word is converted into activism” meaning “action for action’s sake”, (Freire, 1993) which emphasizes a need of a theoretical background that would make sure the action sticks to its objective and develops. So a practice like veganism which has strong ties to everyday consumption habits can be easily converted into action for action’s sake, without a solid theory that supports it. *When it’s stripped down to individual choices or a diet, it becomes a nomad concept and a potential commodity.*

These discourses show themselves in media the most. Michel Foucault argues that discourses are socially constructed meanings within societies and are constituted through the systematic uses of language, social practices and norms. While relying on daily habits, behaviors and traditions discourses are mainly embedded in the language one society speaks. Since language is the performative tool for people to create habits and traditions, social meanings are internalized through it and discourses fulfill their mission by building the ‘reality’ of one society.

Representation in media needs to be studied in order to understand the view on veganism by a certain society since representation contributes into the creation and the sustainment of certain discourses as Stuart Hall (Hall, Evans & Nixon, 2013) would argue. According to Hall “Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It *does* involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things” (Hall, Evans & Nixon, 2013: 1) To be able to have a detailed view on the subject, I have examined six articles on vegans/veganism in total that has been printed in the last two years by two different mainstream newspapers representing two different social groups in Turkey: Cumhuriyet and Sabah.

3.1. CUMHURİYET ON VEGANISM AND VEGANS

Formed in 1924 Cumhuriyet is the oldest newspaper in Modern Turkey. Since it was founded by Yunus Nadi Abalıoğlu, a close friend of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk it's also known to have operated in the construction of the new/secular Turkish Republic, functioning as a 'discourse' apparatus for the Republicans in order to spread the ideas of Atatürk and the newly constructed Turkish Republic. After 93 years of its foundations and some structural changes it had gone through lately, Cumhuriyet still is associated with secularity and modern ideas that's related to Atatürk, so it has an established audience who are also assumed to be strong followers of Atatürk and his ideas. These audience is assumed to be from the middle and upper middle class of Turkey with relatively educated backgrounds and are regular buyers of Cumhuriyet. These details are important in order to have an idea of the historical conceptual map in the reader's head, as to what the reader expects from the newspaper and relates to the news he/she reads on it.

When I searched for the word 'vegan' on Cumhuriyet's website, 12 results showed up starting from June 11th, 2009. Three of the news were about 'neglective vegan parents' that killed their infant. Five of them were about the diet itself in health section, two of them was about vegan protests, one of them was a vegetarian festival and one was about an attack to a vegan restaurant in Tbilisi, Georgia. I have chosen three items considering their variety in terms of the content.

First feature I have chosen is dated 27 December 2015 and is titled 'Interesting Protest at Galatasaray Square' ("Galatasaray Meydanı'nda ilginç eylem", 2017) It's about a protest organized by a Vegan group called Vegan Özgürlük Hareketi and the news photo shows two people holding banners that read 'Hayvan Yeme Vegan Ol'⁶ and 'Kafesler Kırılsın Mezbahalar Yıkılsın'⁷ and also two people lying naked inside human size packages with blood-like fluid covering them,

⁶ 'Don't Eat Animals, Go Vegan'

⁷ 'Break the Cages, Destroy the Slaughterhouses'

apparently imitating ‘beef’ or ‘chicken’ packages that go on sale in the market places. This protest is very much reminiscent of PETA’s style, although there’s no organic relation with these activists and PETA. The way Cumhuriyet chooses to present this news is very telling. The word ‘interesting’ reveals a judgement made; and that although the audience of the newspaper is relatively educated and are in favor of a ‘Western-leaning morality’, they still tend to be strangers to veganism. The spot ‘Vegan Özgürlük Hareketi üyesi bir grup aktivist, Yılbaşı'nda hindi ve çam ağacı kesilmesini protesto etmek için Galatasaray Meydanı'nda soyunarak eylem yaptı...’⁸ again underlines the ‘interesting’ side of the story by including the word ‘soyunarak’ in the sentence. Still demanding interpretation and affirmation from the reader and through demanding this interpretation, the article produces a subject out of the reader in a Foucauldian way. Foucault argues that ‘‘Subject is being produced in two different ways. Through discourse itself which produces the human who attains the knowledge that the discourse produces. Discourse also produces a place for the subject too from which this particular meaning and knowledge makes sense’’ (Hall, Evans & Nixon, 2013: 40). Here the reader is invited to take a position by the tone of the article and take part in producing the knowledge of what a vegan is. Vegans may very well be people that has ‘interesting’ ideas in their head.

Another news item from Cumhuriyet is titled ‘Vegan çiftten bebeklerinin velayeti alındı’⁹ ("Vegan çiftten bebeklerinin velayeti alındı", 2017) dated 12 July 2016. It is about a couple from Italy that ‘caused’ their child to die through feeding it a vegan diet. The text starts with identifying the dead baby’s parents’ nationalities: Father is Indian and mother is Italian. The conceptual mind of the regular Cumhuriyet reader is familiar with the method of regulating people through their ethnicity since the newspaper is founded on strict and systematic promotion of the Turkish identity. Certain characteristic that are linked with certain national identities could make it easier for the reader to jump into conclusions. India is

⁸ ‘‘A group of activists from Vegan Freedom Movement has protested naked against the killing of turkeys and cutting of pine trees in Galatasaray Square.’’

⁹ ‘‘Vegan couple’s parental authority has been suspended’’

mostly depicted as the Orient in relatively Western media, here Cumhuriyet could be counted as one in terms of secularity and since it represents a country that adopted ‘enlightenment’ ideas, in other words there’s historical knowledge of India and historical affective background on the newspaper itself in the reader’s mind. Through this instant knowledge, the reader can easily make the association between an Orient hence an inferior culture and that specific diet itself. Here there’s an invisible power at work. Power working through historical information in the audience’s conceptual mind, producing knowledge, having effects and consequences thus creating meanings.

The third one is titled ‘Vegan beslenme’ which was published in 24 July, 2016 written after the aforementioned news of the Italian vegan couple who caused their baby to die through a vegan diet ("Vegan beslenme", 2017). The text claims that after the controversial events, certain doctors and dieticians have agreed upon a declaration on the topic; although the news does not state who these people are except one dietician called Turgay Köse who has allegedly said:

“Yaşamak için iyi beslenmek gerekir. Bugüne dek yapılan bilimsel araştırmalar insanların 50’ye yakın türde besin ögesine gereksinimi olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bu öğelerin herhangi biri alınmadığında, gereğinden az ya da çok alındığında, büyüme ve gelişmenin engellendiği, sağlığın bozulduğu bilimsel olarak ortaya konmuştur. 1948’de İnsan Hakları Evrensel Beyannamesi ile başlayan süreçten günümüze kadar düzenlenen çeşitli deklarasyonlarda ‘Her yenidoğan büyümesini garanti altına alacak doğru beslenme hakkına sahiptir’ denilmektedir. Kim bilir, belki yıllar sonra birisi çıkıp da ‘Ben ilk 6 ay anne sütü yerine mama ile beslenmişim’ diyerek öz annesine bile dava açabilecek. Hal böyle iken ‘ağzı var dili yok’ denilecek tarzda örnek teşkil eden, isteklerini ve beklentisini bile dile getiremeyecek çağda olan bir bebeğin ebeveynlerinin isteği doğrultusunda

vegan vejetaryenliğe zorlanması bir diyetisyen olarak kabul edilebilir bir şey değil.’’¹⁰

By bringing in professional comment through these doctors, Cumhuriyet solidifies the argument of the topic on positivist grounds which suits its ‘‘secular, forward thinking’’ historical characteristic mentioned above. The reader who is familiar with the paper’s secular hence Western leaning characteristics, is expected to be persuaded through this affirmation made by science which has an automatic pass to make universalizations. Also the fact that Turgay Köse is talking about the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights and mentioning that ‘‘every newborn has the right to be fed right that guarantees its sufficient development’’ indirectly hints that veganism is an extreme idea that should not be ‘forced onto’ babies in development stage. Here no further information is given as to what actually veganism is and if there are healthy vegan people living or not. According to news principles, a news item should stick to the principle of independence and justice and evaluate a text through multiple perspectives and at least should portray all sides in the newspaper that are the subject of the news (“Türkiyeli gazeteciler için etik ilkeler - Medya Derneği”, 2017). The already lack of insight from the vegan community about the subject as well as the lack of information and news on vegans and veganism is further undermined with these kind of negative representations.

3.2. SABAH ON VEGANISM AND VEGANS

¹⁰ ‘‘In order to live you have to eat well. Scientific research has made it clear that people need 50 different types of nutritions. In the case that one of these nutritions is not taken or taken less or more than needed, it has been scientifically proven that growth and development is prevented and the health is worsened. At various declarations that are regulated in the period that began with the ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ in 1948, it’s stated as ‘every newborn has the right to be fed right that guarantees its sufficient development’. Who knows, maybe years later someone will come up and say ‘I was fed with wet food first 6 months instead of breastmilk’ and will be able to sue even their own mothers. So it’s unacceptable for a dietician that a baby who can’t speak and express their desires and expectations to be forced into a vegan vegetarian diet.’’

Sabah newspaper is one of the most circulated daily newspapers in Turkey and is known to be in close relations with and a strong supporter of the AKP government. When I searched for the word ‘vegan’ on the newspaper’s website, just two items related to veganism popped up: One is about a vegan festival in Didim, the other one is about ‘Meatless Monday’: a welfarist promotion tactic that has been invented to be a motivation for people to eat no animal products on that specific day of Monday every week and hence contribute into the lesser consuming of animals. Still, this specific news does not mention the moral/environmental intention behind this tradition but rather just focus on the health aspect.

‘‘Haftada kaç gün et tüketiyorsunuz? (Vegan ve vejetaryenlere değil elbette sorum.) Özellikle spor yapanlar muhtemelen her öğünlerinde hayvansal protein alıyordu. Diğerleri de her öğünde olmasa da gün içerisinde tavuk, balık ya da kırmızı et tüketiyordur. "Bu ne biçim soru? Balıksız, kebapsız, köftesiz gün geçer mi?" diyebilirsiniz. Eti çok sevebilir ve beslenme düzeninizin temel taşı olarak da görebilirsiniz. Peki haftanın bir günü, pazartesi etten uzak kalmaya ne dersiniz?

Tüm dünyada etsiz pazartesi günü geçirme trendi hızla yayılıyor. Bu akıma ayak uyduranlar sosyal medyada vejetaryen yemeklerinin fotoğrafını çekip #meatlessmonday (etsiz pazartesi) etiketiyle paylaşmaktan da geri kalmıyor. Etsiz pazartesi trendinin çıkış amacı bir gün de olsa bedeni hayvansal gıdadan uzak tutmak böylece dinlendirmek ve daha sağlıklı yaşamak.’’¹¹

¹¹ How many days a week do you consume meat? (The question is not for vegans and vegetarians obviously.) Especially those who exercise probably consume animal protein at every meal. Others consume chicken, fish or red meat in the day if not on every meal. You can ask ‘What kind of a question is this? Can a day pass without fish, kebab or metaballs?’. May be you love meat very much and consider it as a foundation of your diet. But how about staying away from meat one day a week, on Mondays? Meatless Monday is a trend in the world. People who take on this trend take photos of their vegetarian food and share it on social media with the hashtag #meatlessmonday. The goal of Meatless Monday is to keep the body away from meat at least once a week and rest it and live healthy.

By removing the moral aspect of this tradition, the article contributes into the depiction of veganism as a dietary choice and the perception of the idea that going vegan is mostly health related. By giving examples to what to eat on these days in the absence of meat, the newspaper also contributes in the idea that vegans eat extraordinary food:

‘‘AVOKADO, KINOA POPÜLER

Peki ama neden pazartesi? Çünkü haftanın ilk günü, genelde diyetin de ilk günü oluyor. Pazartesi başlayanlar genellikle salı pes edebiliyor. Oysa bu zaten bir günlük bir süreç. Hem makarna, pizza yemek serbest. Ama genelde takipçileri peynir ve ekmekten de uzak kalmayı seçiyor. O yüzden bol bol chia tohumu, avokado, kinoa gibi yiyecekleri sosyal medyadan paylaşıyor.’’¹²

Chia seeds, quinoa and avocados are foods that are relatively new and might be unfamiliar to the Turkish markets and are harder to find/buy at local open markets but rather at famous supermarket chains such as Migros, Carrefour and Macro Center and/or at open organic markets in city centers. By not mentioning possible, cheaper options, this article contributes in the idea that veganism can be non-affordable hence not realistic.

Second news item on Sabah’s website about veganism is titled ‘Didim Belediyesi Vegan Kent buluşmasına katıldı’ (Haberleri & Haberleri, 2017) that was published on November 1 2017 on World Vegan Day:

¹² ‘‘AVOCADO AND QUINOA IS POPULAR

Ok but why mondays? Because it’s the first day of the week and usually first day of a diet. Those who start at mondays can give up on tuesday. But this is a one-day period. Both pizza and pasta are allowed but the followers usually choose to stay away from cheese and bread too. That’s why foods like chia seeds, avocado and quinoa is shared on social media.’’

“1 Kasım Dünya Vegan Günü sebebiyle Türkiye Vegan Derneği'nin (TVD) İstanbul'da düzenlediği etkinliğe Didim Belediyesi de katıldı. Etkinlikte Didim Belediyesi stant açarak doğal üretilen ürünleri ile Mübadil Lezzetler Kitabını beğeniye sundu.

Bu yıl 20-22 Nisan tarihleri arasında Didim Vegan Festivalinin ikincisini yapmaya hazırlanan Didim Belediyesi, Türkiye Vegan Derneği'nin İstanbul'da düzenlediği etkinliğe katıldı. Etkinliğe Didim Belediye Başkanı A. Deniz Atabay, Belediye Meclis Üyesi ve DİTAB Başkanı Sevinç Karataş ile Ticaret Odası Strateji Geliştirme Komisyon Başkanı Hikmet Atila katıldı. Didim Vegfest'in büyük ilgi gördüğü toplantıda Vegfest 2018'in hazırlık çalışmalarının startı verildi. Organizasyon da Didimin bilinirliğinin arttırmak amacıyla Didim Belediyesi tarafından üretilen doğal olarak üretilen zeytinyağı, sabun ve aromatik kokular ile yine belediye tarafından hazırlatılan Mübadil lezzetler kitabı beğeniye sunuldu. Etkinlikte Başkan Atabay bir konuşma yaparak Didim'deki Vegan Festivali hazırlıklarını ve ilki yapılan festivalden bilgiler aktardı.”¹³

Although the word ‘vegan’ is used both in the title and within the text, there’s no information as to what ‘vegan’ is. From the text, one gets the idea that it may be about ‘natural’ goods such as soap and olive oil. From the overall article one may

¹³ “Didim Municipality joined the event that has been organized by Türkiye Vegan Derneği in İstanbul for the sake of 1 November World Vegan Day. Didim Municipality has opened a stand in the event on which they have presented natural products and also Mübadil Lezzetler book. Didim Municipality who is preparing to organize the second edition of Didim Vegan Festival this year, has participated in the event that Türkiye Vegan Derneği has organized in İstanbul. Didim Municipality president A. Deniz Atabay, Municipality Parliament Member and DİTAB president Sevinç Karataş and Chamber of Trade Strategy Development Commision President Hikmet Atila joined the event. In the event in which Didim Vegfest had drawn much interest, the preparations for Vegfest 2018 has also started. The olive oil, soup, aromatic scents which were produced by the municipality in order to boost the awareness of Didim and the Mübadil Lezzetler book which was prepared by the municipality has also been presented in the organisation. President Atabay made a speech in the event and gave information on the preparations of Vegan Festival in Didim.”

very well think that it's a protocol meeting about the touristic attractions and traditional natural products in Didim.

The lack of positive representation and very few covering of vegans and veganism in mainstream media is a sign that a decision to abstain from meat on moral grounds does not resonate with the majority of society. In an omnivore-normative world, other attitudes towards eating meat or the lack thereof are to be found either not realistic/serious or pretty doubtful.

CHAPTER 4

VEGANISM AND ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISM IN TURKEY

Until now, I have tried to follow historical approaches to animal rights and how veganism is being represented in the mainstream Turkish media in order to get a grasp on the dominant view of and on the vegan identity that's been emerging in the world and in Turkey today respectively. This part will focus on the emergence of the practical idea of veganism in contemporary İstanbul and to do this I will give a short history of animal rights in modern Turkey and then pass on to the data I gathered through interviews I made with people who identify as vegans in İstanbul.

4.1. ANIMAL RIGHTS IN TURKEY: THEN AND NOW

As stockbreeding has always been a very important economic dependency in the geography Turkey is built upon, the relationship between animals and people is mostly organized depending on that variable on a legislative basis as with many other countries in the world. Although it's clearly stated that animals are not to be tortured or to be subjected to any kind of unnecessary pain, they are seen as private properties in the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey in the law

numbered 5199 passed in June 2014 ("HAYVANLARI KORUMA KANUNU", 2017). According to this law it's also forbidden to:

- a) Hayvanlara kasıtlı olarak kötü davranmak, acımasız ve zalimce işlem yapmak, dövme, aç ve susuz bırakmak, aşırı soğuğa ve sıcağa maruz bırakmak, bakımlarını ihmal etmek, fiziksel ve psikolojik acı çektirmek.¹⁴

But then again it's perfectly legal to sell them and also kill them as long as the pain is reduced and the animal is healthy enough to be killed and sold for religious matters or food:

MADDE 12. - Hayvanların kesilmesi; dini kuralların gerektirdiği özel koşullar dikkate alınarak hayvanı korkutmadan, ürkütmeden, en az acı verecek şekilde, hijyenik kurallara uyularak ve usulüne uygun olarak bir anda yapılır. Hayvanların kesiminin ehliyetli kişilerce yapılması sağlanır.¹⁵

This law is compatible with other animal related laws around the world and is an example as to show the 'almost' universal property status of animals clearly. As we can see, animals are recognized as morally worthy beings that can feel pain but the legal punishment system towards bad behavior to animals seem to protect the rights of the owner of the specific animal rather than the animal itself. It can be argued that any national constitution is already exclusive to certain members of society let alone animals, and since animals are considered as commodities according to law, some vegans argue that we should challenge this norm first through personal advocacy that will in time develop into bigger social movements.

¹⁴ "To behave badly to animals intentionally, to operate without pity and cruelly on them, to beat them, to leave them without food and water, to expose them to cold and hot, to neglect their care, to cause psychological or physical pain."

¹⁵ "The slaughter of animals should be made in accordance with the special conditions that religion requires without scaring them, with minimal cause of pain, following hygienic rules and at one time. The slaughter of animals should be done by professionals."

Since we are talking about a norm as old as the emergence of human civilization, today's understanding of the nonhuman animals as morally worthy beings has not been of much legislative debate among Turkish society. In Ottoman period too, animals were valuated according to their economic worth and thus legal arrangements were made on their working conditions. After the Second Constitutional Monarchy was declared on 1908, through the attempts of the Westernization movement and the increase on stray dog population, one of the most remembered mass killing of stray animals occurred. Thousands of stray dogs in İstanbul were collected and put on Hayırsız Island to die (Menteş Gürler, Melikoğlu & Osmanağaoğlu, 2009).

The event of Hayırsız Island drew attention from some circles as to the handling and preventing the mistreatment of animals. Certain NGOs concerning street animals started to be formed around this period, one of the first being Arms of Mercy which was founded by the efforts of an American philanthropist Alice Washburn Manning with the help and crew she gathered from Robert College in 1912 (Menteş Gürler, Melikoğlu & Osmanağaoğlu, 2009). This group also helped in the founding of the first legal NGO that concerns animals under the title İstanbul Himâye-i Hayvânât Cemiyeti same year in İstanbul within the Beyoğlu Municipality (Menteş Gürler, Melikoğlu & Osmanağaoğlu, 2009).

After the Turkey Republic was formed, the first animal protection organization of modern Turkey was established in 1923 with the name The Turkish Society for the Protection of Animals and started its activities in 1924 which included the trade of old/unhealthy animals which were of no use to people also their euthanasia if necessary and also the ‘‘prevention of the practice of the veterinary profession by people lacking a diploma of veterinary medicine; the organization of public events at elementary and high schools; the reward of people who took good care of their animals; the ensurance of the protection of birds and the performance of continuous inspection by means of various institutions’’ (Menteş Gürler & Osmanağaoğlu, 2009). For a long time, this was the only organization

that dealt with animals in Turkey for about until the 1950s. Association for the Protection of Animals” was founded in Ankara in 1956 and Society of Animal Rightists in İstanbul in early 1970’s. (Menteş Gürler & Osmanağaoğlu, 2009).

As with the first action to control stray animal population in İstanbul after the Second Constitutional Monarchy, the preparation and the passing of the first animal protection law in the constitution of modern Turkey seem to have got to do with the Westernization policies as well. The first legal step regarding animal rights was taken during the European Union interviews Turkey made with the EU when Turkey signed the arrangement on ‘the Protection and Welfare of Pet Animals’ in Strasbourg in 1999 which was approved in 2003 and made it mandatory of the Turkish State to include an animal protection law in their constitution (Yaşar & Yerlikaya, 2004) which was passed in 2004 under the title 5199 ("HAYVANLARI KORUMA KANUNU", 2017).

It’s interesting to see how the ideas of ‘protection’ and ‘controlling’ seem to engage, intertwine with and complete each other all through these legislations. This is a very common aspect of the state that’s practiced upon every member of society, in order to govern better as Michel Foucault would argue: “This word [government] must be allowed the very broad meaning it had in the sixteenth century. ‘Government’ did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather, it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed – the government of children, of souls, of communities, of the sick ... *To govern, in this sense, is to control the possible field of action of others*” (Foucault & Faubion, 2000).

Here the idea of ‘a possible field of action’ emerges as possible public spheres with possible subjects and objects; animals in this sense gain an indirect inclusion in sociality. Through the counting, labelling and framing of these animal bodies out there, the state produces knowledge on both nonhuman animals and their human owners. The attempt to control nonhuman animal population in this sense,

can be seen as an act of biopolitics. Framing of animal bodies as such has a performative quality too. Through the attempt at governing of these animals by the law, animals emerge as objects to be dealt with particular behavior on the subject's side; types of behavior which will eventually form the basis and common understanding of 'the normal': The nature of the relationship between humans and nonhuman animals.

From the first regulative action about animals in Second Constitutional Monarchy period to the first animal protection law in modern Turkey's history, not much seems to have changed in terms of the perspective of the law regarding animals. Animals still continue to be labelled as properties and a similar control mechanism with the Ottoman period is still at work. Secured by Animal Protection Law of 2004, municipalities continue to take the responsibility of stray animal population in cities.

Here we should mention the most dominant contemporary animal rights organization in Turkey: Hayvan Hakları Federasyonu also known as HAYTAP. Founded in 2008 HAYTAP is now the biggest animal rights NGO in Turkey. As with many other smaller animals related organization in Turkey, HAYTAP too seems to be more focusing on mistreated cats, dogs and occasionally horses in İstanbul. They organize adoption campaigns, protests at animal shelters or engage in single issue campaigns such as protesting against the usage of horses in Prince's Islands, they don't advocate either veganism or vegetarianism. In their limited field of action, HAYTAP can be seen as a welfarist NGO, and since they deal with animals that we already do not eat, their circle of contribution is wider than any other group which advocates a meat free way of life.

It is also interesting to realize how the word 'hayvan' now seems to have transformed to include just pets or animals who we consider as non-edible in our culture, such as cats, dogs, horses, parrots, pigeons. This contributes to the idea I have suggested earlier while discussing the correlation between the

Protestant/disenchanted world which favored work and division of labor in society and built their moral system according to this basis. Here the pattern emerges again: It's only if you are useful to a society you are considered a part of it; so because of their contribution to the common life, some animals seem to being considered as more useful than others.

Speaking of advocating a meat free practice, another NGO in İstanbul comes up by the name Türkiye Vegan ve Vejetaryenlar Derneği: TVD. Openly calling themselves a 'welfarist organization' in their manifesto on their website, this NGO is an advocate of veganism and vegetarianism and bears similarities with PETA in terms of executing their policies such as co-working with other organizations, celebrities, engaging heavily with social media and organizing single-issue campaigns:

“TVD olarak, temeli hayvan refahı ve özgürlüğüne dayanan yönüyle; hayvan esaretine son verilmesi, bu süreçte hayvanların maruz kaldığı vahşet, işkence ve kötü muamelelerin ortadan kaldırılması için gerekli her türlü girişimde bulunulması, kamuoyunun bu konuda bilinçlendirilerek tür ve sınıf gözetmeksizin tüm canlılara eşit yaşam hakkı tanınması; türcülüğün ortadan kaldırılması, Türkiye’de yaşayan tüm vegan ve vejetaryenlerin (veganlar, laktolar, ovolar ve ovo-laktolar) sosyal anlamda tek çatı altında toplanması, genel anlamda veganlık ve vejetaryenlik bilincinin etkinleştirilmesi ve geliştirilmesi, bu konuda çalışmalar yapan kişi ve kuruluşlara destek verilmesi, Bu yaşam tarzını seçen ve seçmek isteyen insanların sağlıklı ve kaliteli bir yaşam sürmesi için gerekli tedbirlerin alınması, sıkıntılara çözüm geliştirilmesi, ana amacımızdır.” (“Misyonumuz”, 2017)¹⁶

¹⁶ “As TDV, with a ground that relies on animal welfare and freedom, our main mission is to end animal captivity, to take every action needed to eliminate the torture and bad behavior animals go through, to educate the public and give the right to every living beings independent of their species and class, to gather every vegans and vegetarians (vegans, lactos, ovos, and ovo-lactos) that live in Turkey under the same umbrella in a social sense, to develop the consciousness of veganism and vegetarianism in general, to support individuals and institutions who work in this topic, to take

Both HAYTAP and TVD are official organizations that accept donations for the necessary expenses of the organization to keep up running. There are two other main animal rights activist groups in Turkey worthy to mention. Yeryüzüne Özgürlük Derneği and Abolistyonist Vegan Hareket. Though similar in their DIY, less institutionalized approach to activism, these two movements differ very much in their core stand to animal rights thought.

Yeryüzüne Özgürlük Derneği seems to be closer to an anarchist movement, advocating not only animal liberation but suggesting that a separate liberation is not possible and all liberations can only come together hence what we need is a ‘total liberation’. The intro to their manifesto reads as:

“Bizler doğadaki tüm varlıklar üzerindeki egemenliğe karşı özgürleşmeyi ve özgürleştirmeyi savunuyoruz. Canlılara yönelik her türlü zulmü reddediyoruz. Reddedişimiz, şiddetin, insanların kendi aralarındaki ilişkilerin bozulmasına ya da kabalaşmasına katkıda bulunmasından çok, tamamen canlıların esenliğinin kısıtlanması ya da haklarının ihlal edilmesi nedeniyledir. Odağında sadece insan menfaatini barındıran davranışları, uygulamaları ve politikaları benimsemiyoruz. Bu nedenle evcilleştirmeleri ve insanın doğa üzerinde mülkiyet kurma talep ya da girişimlerini reddediyoruz.” (“Manifesto”, 2017)¹⁷

cautions in order for people who choose or want to choose this lifestyle to live a healthy and qualified life, to offer solutions to problems.”

¹⁷ “We defend freedom and to free against the oppression on every living being in nature. We reject any cruelty directed at living beings. The reason behind this rejection is because living beings well-being is being limited or their rights are being violated not because violence causes a degeneration on the relationships between people or causes it to become ruder. We do not embrace behavior, practices and politics that focus on human benefit. That’s why, we reject domestications and every human demand and intent to create a commodity out of nature.”

As an anarchist leaning movement Yeryüzüne Özgürlük Derneği organizes many panels on intersectional forms of oppression, veganism etc but they also organize single issue campaigns such as ‘Türkiye’de Hayvanlı Sirkler Yasaklansın’ ("Kampanyalar", 2017). They are a politically and theoretically charged group but not very active as of lately. Their official web site is down and I tried to connect them for an interview for my thesis in November 2017 for a while but no one responded to my e-mails.

One last activist group I would like to mention is the Vegan Abolisyonist Hareket, the official İstanbul branch of Abolitionist Approach to Animal Rights developed by Gary L. Francione. As the only vegan abolitionist group in Turkey, VAH strictly advocates veganism as the basis of their approach to animal rights. They are not an official organization and according to their counter-stand against NGO's they will never be an official NGO. One of the people I have interviewed from the group, Özlem, a 42-year-old woman from İstanbul told me that the reason they were against organizing as an official NGO was that the nature of an NGO is against the nature of their activism. She proceeded to tell me:

“Öncelikli olarak dernekleşmede şey oluyor: Benim bireysel yapıcağım çaba dışında, bir dernek olsun da, yapılması gerekeni onlar yapsınlar, ben bir bağış vereyim ya da bi destek olayım gerisini onlar yapsın gibi. O kişisel aktivizmi ben çok çok çok çok çok kıymetli buluyorum, her konuda. Bence dünya böyle değişecek, ancak insanlar kişisel aktivizm yaptığı zaman değişecek. Böyle bi sıkıntısı var dernekleşmenin. Bir de yani ister istemez şimdi mesela vegan pikniklerde dört yıldır özellikle bazen mesela vegan mangal yaptığımızda falan işte insanlar bışiler getiriyolar mesela mangal olsun diye işte soya küpüydü bilmemneydi falan, tabii efor sarfediyoruz ve diyebiliriz ki kişi başı 5 lira. Ama böyle bir şeyi kabul etmiyorum ben, doğru da bulmuyorum çünkü birilerinden bir maddi çıkarın olduğu zaman

aslında konsantre olduğun o öz olan hak mücadelesini kaçırmaman mümkün değil çünkü profesyonelleşiyosun.’’¹⁸

VAH’s approach to sticking to grassroots activism is important in the sense that this what makes its way of activism as an ‘ongoing practice’; in a sense activism as a lifestyle which challenges the other, main stream idea of veganism as a lifestyle but in a consumerist fashion. VAH’s approach mostly relies on the everyday encounters with people through vegan stands, unofficial vegan gatherings, the heavy use of social media and ‘educating’ each other. In this sense it’s the only non-welfarist group in the aforementioned activist groups.

4.2. INTERVIEWS, DISCUSSIONS

Other than literature reviewing and theoretical and historical research on the subject, for my data collection on the vegan identity in İstanbul, I have made interviews with 14 people, of which 13 identified as vegans for a while now. One other (Fatma) tried being vegan for two years but then went back to an omnivore diet and still considers herself an non vegan. The interviews were carried out between October and December 2017, five of which was made face to face and recorded on a Sony IC Recorder, four of them was through Skype and five of them were made through online chatting. All of them said they are comfortable with sharing their real names, ages and occupations in this thesis. In my selection of the people I talked with, I tried to be as inclusive as I could, trying to watch out for diversity in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Although I

¹⁸ ‘‘What happens with NGOs is this: I may think it’s enough that the NGO does all the work for me with my donation, without any personal effort. I value personal activism very very very very much, in all topics. I believe the world will change like this, only if people do personal activism. This is a problem with NGOs. Another thing is that, for instance in vegan picnics for the last four years, especially when we do vegan mangals, people bring something for the mangal like soy cubes whatever. We make effort on these and we could say it’s 5 Lira per person but I don’t accept anything like this and I don’t find it right because when you have financial expectations it’s impossible for you to not miss out on the struggle of rights, because you become professionalized.’’

am told by the people I met that there's a great increase in the number of men who would go vegan in recent years, my interviewees identified mostly as women in the end (nine women, five men to be precise).

I have reached out these people through social media and through snowballing technique: One friend I have interviewed (Berna) had introduced me to three others (Cansen, Onur, Gülce), Aydinç led me to Oğuz and Sevi to Betül. Others I either knew personally or had an idea of them through social media if not in person. All of the interviewees is a university graduate, some of them with post graduate degrees or still enrolled in a post graduate program (five MA's, two PHDs). Although I can't say they were all economically strong people, this detail sure poses a certain meaning, bringing to the front the idea of privilege and underlining the contribution of what Bourdieu called as 'cultural capital' when it comes to a consumption related identity as veganism.

Table 2: Participants

Participant	Age	Sex	Profession	Vegan for	Activist
Ahmet	35	Male	Sound Engineer	7 years	No
Aydinç	30	Male	Receptionist	2 years	Yes
Berna	35	Female	Architect	4 years	Yes
Betül	28	Female	Public Relations	6 months	No
Bora	35	Male	Academician	2 years	No
Cansen	29	Female	Editor	1 year	No
Ekin	36	Female	Musician	6 years	No
Fatma	40	Female	Stewardess	2 years (not anymore)	No
Gülce	36	Female	Music Teacher	6 years	Yes
Güneş	29	Female	Editor	2 years	No

Oğuzhan	35	Male	Academician	3 years	Yes
Onur	36	Male	Publisher	1 year	No
Özlem	42	Female	Veterinary	4,5 years	Yes
Sevi	35	Female	Art Direction	3 years	No

4.2.1. ‘Person/Vegan’: Why Would One Go Vegan?

One thing that grabs my attention in the digital society of now, is the way people compose their biographies in the ‘bio’ parts of their social media accounts such as Twitter/Instagram and Facebook. What particular characteristic qualifies enough to guarantee a place there? Bios that read such remarks as ‘father of 2/curious cat/vegan’ or ‘vegan/yogi/lover’ made one of the starting points of my initial motivations to write this thesis. Hence I asked every person I talked with, how they became vegan and how they relate veganism to their overall identity. Of course the answers diverted depending on the person’s social status and hence their *habitus*.

Nevertheless, I have spotted two differing ways that led the people I have talked with, to make the decision to go vegan. First one is a personal event or chain of events in which the person experiences a confrontation of a *moral dilemma regarding their behavior towards animals*, this could be in the shape of an ‘overnightly’ sudden change that comes after an encounter with a violent scene but also as a result of an ongoing influence of friends or articles and/or books on veganism, Betül’s, Cansen’s, Ekin’s Gülce’s, Güneş’s, Onur’s, Oğuzhan’s and Özlem’s transition stood at this side of the schema. Barbara McDonald calls these kinds of first hand encounters as ‘Catalytic Experience’: ‘The experience that introduced the participant to some aspect of animal cruelty, and resulted in repression or becoming oriented.’ (McDonald, 2000: 6). Second way was as a result of a broader political questioning of the world and the current system we live in. Ahmet, Aydinç, Berna, Bora and Sevi’s decision go vegan mostly had to

do with this kind of questioning, of some of which was reinforced by Gezi Protests they have actively been a part of. Worthy to note that these ways are not necessarily exclusive of each other, whether the initial decision came after the intense weighing in of one firstly, most of the participants experienced both processes one way or another, some of them going through the ‘emotional’ phase first and then moving onto other related issues, some of them following a more top-to-bottom fashion in which they had made a ‘rational’ observation to stand against certain woven forms of oppression forms.

4.2.1.1. Emotional Encounters as Catalytic Experiences

Eight of the participants expressed a first hand, in some cases somewhat shocking, that is *emotional*, experiences that made them come face to face with their conflicting behavior towards animals in terms of morality. For example, Betül, a 28-year-old public relations manager graduated from Trakya University went vegan because she saw blood in the eggs that she broke once. She told me she was already a vegetarian from birth so it was an easy transition (‘‘Hayatım boyunca %80 vegan beslendiğim için benim için kolay bir pratik oldu.’’)¹⁹ though she recalls this very moment as a ‘breaking point’ (‘‘kırılma’’) in her life. She is quite fond of her vegan identity and tells me she never felt discriminated because of her choice. When I asked her if she felt her being vegan might have made other people ‘uncomfortable’ she responded ‘I don’t think so’: ‘‘Uzunca bir süredir etik olarak hak verdiğim bir duruşu kendi hayatımda pratik etmenin mutluluğunu yaşadım. Yaşıyorum ve genel olarak pozitif ayrımcılığa uğruyorum.’’²⁰

As with Betül, Onur told me that he felt relieved to have finally made this transition to veganism because he was saved from a ‘conscientious burden’: ‘‘Çevremdeki vegan arkadaşlarımdan dinlediklerim ve veganlıkla ilgili okuduklarım, hayvan kullanımıyla ilgili öteden beri hissettiğim huzursuzluğun

¹⁹ ‘‘It was an easy transition for me since I had been a vegetarian from birth’’.

²⁰ ‘‘I lived the joy of practicing something that I had been approving as an ethical stand for a long time. I still live and mostly I am exposed to positive discrimination.’’

nedenini anlamamı sağladı. Böylece Ekim 2016'da vegan beslenmeye başladım. Bir kere, vicdani bir yükten kurtuldum, kendimi ahlaken daha tutarlı hissetmeye başladım. Sağlık açısından da tansiyon sorunun kendi kendine çözüldü, daha enerjik ve iyi hissediyorum bedenimi. Gündelik hayatı hep alıştığım şekilde (ayak üstü beslenme, yünlü kıyafetler giyme, yemek yapmak için daha az vakit harcama) sürdürmüyorum ve bu değişikliği de olumlu görüyorum.”²¹

After years of living as a vegetarian, Ekin became vegan after she found that baby cows were killed in order to make cheese too. Before that she simply thought cheese and milk were innocent when compared to milk since no animals were harmed in the making of them. Her transition then, came after a personal encounter with a violent action regarding consuming animal products. She told me she would have felt like a hypocrite if she kept on consuming dairy from that moment on. Gülce too, went vegan overnight, after watching a video in April 2011, telling she became vegan in order to not keep on contributing to what she saw in that video that day.

Özlem’s transition too came after a confrontation with her own inconsistent behavior towards animals: “Bir gün bi vegan bana şey sordu, işte hani süt için kullanılan ineklerin yavrularına ne oluyo diye sordu. Ben de noluyo dedim, o da noluyo dedi, ben de noluyo dedim. O da noluyo dedi. O an noluyo diye böyle bi dehşete kapıldım çünkü ne olduğunu fark ettim.”²² This terror she had gone through after realizing what actually happened to the baby cows, made her realize that she had to go vegan if she did not approve of such event.

²¹ “Listening to my vegan friends and reading on veganism made me realize the reason of the unease I was feeling for a long time. So I started eating vegan in Octobe 2016. First of all, I got rid of the burden on my conscious, I started feeling morally consistent. Health-wise my blood pressure problem disappeared, I feel more energetic and good. I don’t live my daily life as I have before (eating gast, wearing wool, spending less time on cooking) and I see this as a positive change.

²² “One day a vegan asked me, asked what happened to the babies of the cows that are used for milk. I said what? She said what? I said what again? She said what back. That moment i was terrorized because i realized what happens to them.”

4.2.1.2. Rational Evaluation and Taking Action

The other path that led to veganism for some of my participants can be defined as more rational than emotional; coming after a certain time of observation, evaluation and finally taking action. With this group, the decision is mostly rational than emotional and is executed after a certain time of procession in which multiple issues are considered. Ahmet, Aydinç, Berna, Bora and Sevi's decisions to go vegan resonated with this process mostly; Aydinç and Bora's transition in particular being catalyzed with the questioning atmosphere of the Gezi Period; others more or less following that spirit and finding themselves thinking about veganism after being engaged in social injustices whether actively on field or through reading and researching.

Ahmet recalls his transition to veganism was catalyzed by the things he read about the impact of livestock breeding on the environment. This made him think about the effects of the industry as well as the industry itself. Then came, readings on slaughterhouses, on eating animals, using animals as sources and every living being's right to live and he read further: "Kendi eylemlerim, tercihlerim ve yediklerimin ne anlama geldiği, bunların ahlaki yönü ve doğurduğu sonuçlar üzerine edindiğim bilgiler, düşündüklerim ve yaşadığım aydınlanma süreciyle beraber vegan olmaya karar verdim."²³

Sevi too mentions of a conflictive situation she found herself in when she realized how her everyday actions did not reflect in her consumption habits: "İnandığım değerler ve tüketim alışkanlıklarım arasında büyük bir çelişki olduğunu farkettim ve vegan olmaya karar verdim. Vegan arkadaşlarım, izlediğim belgeseller, yazılar, videolar, direkt veganlık üzerine odaklanmamış olanlar da dahil, çevre, sağlık gibi

²³ "With the information I got on what my personal actions, preferences, what I ate meant, the moral side of these things and their consequences and after the enlightenment I lived through this period, I decided to go vegan."

konularda olanlar da bu kararında etkili oldu.”²⁴ Apparently a certain amount of time had to pass for Sevi to finally take this way. She spent a considerable amount of time in observing, internalizing and evaluation the information she did receive from her vegan friends, documentaries she had watched and the things she had read. This needed a procession period in which she had been considering multiple dimensions behind this decision; not only animal rights but health-related and environmental issues too.

Berna had various reasons to go vegan too. She says the most important reason was her stand against violence, then came the information she had about animal food consumption’s harm on human health (that consuming animal products can lead to cancer) and the environment.

30-year-old receptionist Aydinç talks about coming face to face with the ‘conflicting’ nature of his life in theory and practice in his decision to go vegan: “2013 yılında Gezi zamanında böyle Twitter’da bio kısmına şey yazmıştım böyle: işte cinsiyetçiliğe, homofobiye, transfobiye işte ayrımcılığın her türlüsüne karşıyım, türçülüğe vs, her türlüsüne karşıyım yazmışım ama daha sonraki süreçte, ayrımcık karşıtı olduğumu söylüyorum, türçülüğe karşı olduğumu söylüyorum ama türçü bir şekilde yaşamaya devam ettiğimin farkına vardım. Önce böyle dedim ki bio kısmından bu türçülüğü çıkarsam mı dedim ama çok büyük bi saçmalık olurdu çünkü hani bu yanlış bir şey, farkındayım ve bu yanlış düzeltmem gerekiyordu.”²⁵

²⁴ “I realized that there was a great contradiction between the values I believed and my consumption habits and I decided to become a vegan. My vegan friends, the documentaries I have watched, articles, videos, even those which don’t focus on veganism only but about environment and health too, has played a role in this decision.”

²⁵ “In 2013, around Gezi times, I had written in the bio part of Twitter: I am against sexism, homophobia, transphobia and all kinds of discrimination, speciesism etc, all of them but after that, I say I am against speciesism but I realized that I had been living as a speciesist. First I thought if I should remove speciesism from my bio but then it would have been a big nonsense because it’s wrong and i’m aware of it, and I had to fix this wrong.”

His transition to veganism then was catalyzed around Gezi Protests in which he was actively a part of within the LGBTİ+ community: “Ben 2012 yılından beri LGBTİ+ aktivizmi yapıyorum ve yani Gezi zamanında da Gezi parkında böyle birçok yerde hani işte cinsiyetçilik türçülük homofobi transfobi böyle bir sürü şey vardı. Benim ilk duyduğum zaman bunları Gezi zamanı olduğunu söyleyebilirim, türçülüğün ne olduğuna dair. O zamanlar hiç tanışmamıştım ama Gezi parkında LGBTİ+’lar gibi veganların da olduğu bir çadır varmış, onlarla hiç o zamanlar denk gelmedim. Denk geldiysem de çok fazla aşına olamadım, onlarla bi iletişim kuramadım. Türçülüğe karşı olmamız gerekiyo, yanlış bişey var hani evet, zamanla arkadaş ortamlarında konuştukça türçülüğün yanlış bişey olduğunun farkına varıyorsunuz. Çünkü ben de bir LGBTİ+ elçisi olarak toplum tarafından sürekli ayrımcılığa maruz kalıyorum benim gibi ayrımcılığa maruz kalan birileri daha var bunun farkına varıyorum.”²⁶

Bora too started to think about the idea of intersected nature of oppression forms around Gezi Protests. “Aslında ilk vegan olduğumda, biraz daha böyle bi politik oluş. Dönem de daha Gezi zamanı, biraz daha böyle bi tüm acaba bişeyler yapılabilir mi daha geniş anlamda dünyada, şeklinde bir akım vardı. O zaman aslında etrafımda biraz böyle nutuk atmadan diyim, daha böyle çok mümkün merteye çok alttan alta bi nevi propaganda, bi nevi açıklama anlatma ya da böyle bi oluş, var ne düşünüyorsunuz gibi bi nevi tartışmaya açma, soru işareti en azından bi skeptisizm üretme üzerinden bişeyler yapıyodum.”²⁷

²⁶ “I have been doing LGBTİ+ activism since 2012 and i mean in Gezi times in Gezi Park there was a lot of things like sexism, speciesism, homophobia, transphobia etc. I can say first time I heard about these thing in Gezi about what speciesism is. Then, I never met but there was a tent with vegans in Gezi Park like LGBTİ+ people. Even if i met them I did not get to know them, did not communicate with them. We have to against speciesism, there’s something wrong I mean yes, in time as we have talked in between friends, you realize speciesism is wrong. Because I am an LGBTİ+ ambassador I am constantly exposed to discrimination by the society. And there are others that are discriminated too like me and I realize that.”

²⁷ “Actually when I first became vegan, it was a bit more like becoming political. It was around Gezi times, there was a trend of if we can do something as a whole in a general sense in the world. Then, I was doing some sort of a subtle propaganda, some sort of explaining, telling, or some sort of opening to discussion that there’s some becoming here, what do you think? I was producing a question mark, at least a scepticism.”

4.2.2. Ethics as Lifestyle: Becoming Vegan

Whether catalyzed by a personal ‘shocking’ encounter or came in after a more top-to-bottom questioning of the system, people’s stories of transition to veganism featured this ‘conscientious burden’ Onur pointed at about before as a prominent topic in almost every one. This burden or ‘self guilt’ if you will, seem to be the core reason people respond to which lights the first match in what will be a long running act of transforming oneself. Engaging in one form of political action opens other doors of possible engagements in other forms of political micro struggles. The process of transformation that begins with going vegan, requires change in other aspects of life too and going vegan brought profound amounts of ‘change’ to the lives of all of the people I have talked with, whether a change of diet, a change in body shape, a change in social life, a change in *looking* at life; basically a shift in *ethics* in a Foucauldian understanding of the term. In her article called ‘‘Foucault and the Ethics of Eating’’ Chloe Taylor takes on Foucault’s argument ‘‘that modern liberation movements should return to the ancient model of ethics, of which diet was a prime example, as aesthetics or self-transformative practice’’ and studies it with the ‘‘dietetics of ethical vegetarianism.’’ (Taylor, 2010:1). Following her application of Foucauldian ethics to diet-related resistance movements and comparing this suggestion to my data evaluation, I argue that vegans in İstanbul too are taking up this ‘self-transformative’ act as a form of resistance to a certain point, as ‘techniques of the self’ as Foucault would argue. Taylor says ‘‘Relations with others, Foucault claims, are the domain of power, which he had explored throughout his genealogical period, whereas *ethics is the domain of how we relate to ourselves, or how we transform ourselves.*’’ (Taylor, 2010).

My interviewees took up this attempt to ‘change’ willingly. Bora mentioned a certain discomfort within ‘a culture that promotes meat’: ‘‘Çok fazla etrafımda kültür içine sinmiş bi et tüketimi ve hayvan tüketimi vardı. İçinde bulunduğum kültürün. Böyle bi iki yüzlü ve şey gelmeye başladı, insanların bu yine, o

zamanlar okuduğum şeyleri düşünüyorum, bi et propagandası var, et ve erkek egemen kültürün aslında çok bağı var. O zamanlar okumamıştım Carol Adams'ı ama oralardaydım, kafam oralardaymış yani. Neyse bu ilişkiler ağı falan bi rahatsız etti sonra 2011'de niye bu kadar uzatıyorumki yani arada ufak yemeler dışında kesiyorum dedim vejetaryen oldum. Bir gün böyle bi yine bi ortamda, dost meclisinde tartışırken yine böyle, baktım çok ciddi bi rezistans var veganlara karşı, ben de vegan dilim dedim ama yine bu rezistans, yani bi sürü şey var. kötü, kötü, kötü! neden? 'onlar en azından bişey yapmaya çalışıyorlar güzel bişey yapmaya çalışıyorlar'ın üzerinden dedim 'ben artık demek kafa olarak da oraya gitmişim, geriye sadece şunu yememek kalıyo' zaten yemeyle ilgili çok çok yiyen biri de diilim, yemeği çok çok seven biri de diilim yani işte öyle yok aman peynirsiz bişeysiz yapamam gibi bişeyim yok öyle yani. Öyle bi tarzım da yok. Bıçak gibi geçtim işte.'²⁸

This 'resistance' from the other side that Bora mentions above manifests itself in various forms in other interviewees' talks and in fact it can be considered as a part of this transformation process which may trigger the need to occupy with other actions in order to sustain oneself's ongoing transformation such as getting to know how to talk to people about veganism through reading and researching further, how to react to and transform the close friend circle and environment around you etc. Identifying as an Abolitionist Vegan, Özlem says that this resistance from non

vegans comes as in no different from the resistance of other discriminative behavior such as homophobia, racism etc. Her main way to counter resist this

²⁸ "There was a lot of meat and animal consuming in the culture that surrounded me. The culture i was in. it started to feel hypocritical that people... I think about the books I was reading then, there's a meat propaganda and there's a tight link between meat and patriarchy. I did not read Carol Adams then but I was there, I mean my head was there. Anyways these network of relations made me uncomfortable then in 2011 i said why am I lingering, I will cut except for eating once or twice and I became vegan. Then one day again in a gathering of friends while discussing, I realized that there's a serious resistance against vegans. I said i am not vegan but this resistance and there's a lot of... bad, bad, bad! Why? I said 'they at least are trying to do something, trying to something good' and i said 'so seems like my mind is there too, then only thing I have to do is to not eat these' and I' not a person that eats a lot, that loves food a lot I mean there's nothing like 'I cannot do without cheese or anything'. I don't have that style. I transitioned like a knife.'

resistance is to keep on trying: ‘‘Arkadař ortamlarımı hep d n řt rmeye  alıřtıđ, d n řt r yorum, bu da hi  zor olmuyo aslında hani, řey olarak, uđrařtıđın zaman deđiřiyo ya, uđrařmazsan deđiřmiyo iřte. Yani atıyorum bi yerde arkadaşlarınla buluşup biřeyler i iceksin, tamam řuraya gidelim, bunu i elim vesaire gibi alternatifler  ođalttıđın zaman hi  de b yle bi, ha yanımda birileri biřey yiyo kurbanım ben gibi d ř nm yosun. Ha iř hayatında oluyo ama yani ben iřimde  ok řanslıyım. Hani  yle  ok b yle iř toplantıları falan  yle řeyler. Yani  ok řanslıyım derken veteriner hekimim yani barınakta  alıřıyorum korkun  tabi de, *bi yandan iř yemekleriydi řuydu buydu b yle řeylerle karřılařmak zorunda olmuyorum ama olursa da iřte gittiđim yerde iřte hazırlıklı gidiyorum.*’’²⁹

4.2.3. Ethics as Cultural Capital

It’s important to remember that these ‘techniques of the self’ may also be conditioned with the habitus of oneself that make these techniques possible and/or doable. Every participant mentioned the role of reading or watching documentaries on their transition mostly sources in English, not to mention their education status which turns the problem of access on their advantage to a certain point. In Ekin’s case for instance, the personal transformation had owed much to having the premises or friends that made it possible to be exposed to certain resources such as Youtube videos which aired mostly in English, articles, books girince  ođu insanın kayıtsız kalmayacađını d ř n yorum ancak  evresel pek  ok fakt r de bu pratiđi s rd rmede  ok belirleyici tabii. vegan bir kiři bu ‘‘kavram’’ı s rekli besleyip yenilemeli ki s rd r lebilirliđi artsın. *bunun i in de elbette*

²⁹ ‘‘I always worked to transform my friend surroundings, I am transforming. It’s never difficult indeed, you know when you work hard it changes, if you don’t try, it doesn’t. I mean let’s say you’re going to meet friends somewhere to have drinks, if you increase your alternatives on lets go this place, drink that, you never think like ah someone’s eating this next to me I am the victim here. It happens at work but I mean I am very lucky at work. I mean not many business meetings and such. I mean when I say I’m lucky I’m a veterinary doctor I work at the shelter, It’s horrible of course but on the other hand I don’t have to deal with things like work dinners etc. But if I have to, I go there prepared.’’

okuyacak, izleyecek kaynak olsun, tartışacak insan olsun gerekli diye düşünüyorum.’’³⁰

Özlem on the other hand underlines the importance of education, another technique of the self, even after becoming a vegan too. She says even after four and a half years of vegan living, she still keeps on educating herself in order to be able to educate others. ‘Go vegan and educate others’ is the motto of Abolitionist Vegans (Francione, 2000) and Özlem seems to be strongly rooting for this for herself as well as her environment too: ‘‘Gördüm ki ne kadar okursak bu konuya dair, hayvan hakları hareketine dair ne kadar okursak, o kadar rahat savunabiliyoruz bunu çünkü hani vegan olmak demek bi anda o türçülüğten kurtulmak demek olmuyo ya. İnsan ister istemez bi şeye kayıyoruz hele ki hayvanların bazı durumlarda kullanabileğini söyleyen, mesela veganların babası Peter Singer vs okumadan, aslında iyi niyetli bi şekilde böyle hayvan haklarına dair güzel bi şeyler yapmak isteyen Tom Reagan falan okumadan sonuca varamıyoruz, malesef içimizdeki o türçülüğten kurtulamıyoruz yani. Dolayısıyla şunu söylemek istemem asla: Yani bi insan ancak abolistyonist olursan hayvan haklarını savunur demiycem, demiyorum hiçbir zaman da demedim. Bilmeden de teori iyi niyetli bi şekilde, güzel şekilde savunabilir. Tutarlı ve tavizsizdir, böyle bangır bangır güzel bi şekilde anlatır. Ben buna rağmen hep şeyi öğütlerim. Okumak lazım, tartışmak lazım bu konuyla ilgili diye.’’³¹

³⁰ ‘‘When you talk about it through a very basic point such as the right to live i believe most people cannot stay indifferent but of course environmental issues play a role in sustaining this practice too. Vegan person should feed and renew this concept all the time so that the sustainability increases. To do this I think, you need people to talk and sources to watch.’’

³¹ I saw that the more you read on this subject, the more you read about animal rights movement, we can better defend this because you know being vegan doesn't mean you get rid of speciesism instantly. You unavoidably get close to somewhere, especially without reading Peter Singer who's the father of vegans who says that animals can be used in certain cases, or Tom Regan who with good intentions want to do something good for animal rights, you can't get any results, I mean unfortunately we can't escape the speciesism in us. Consequently, I don't ever wanna say this: A person can only defend animal rights if they are abolitionists. I won't say it i have never said it. Theory can be defended without knowing to just as good. A person can be consistent and uncompromising and can defend loudly beautifully. In spite of this I always advise this: We need to read and discuss about this topic.

Her belief in education is a supportive bannister for the ever-evolving ethical subject that Foucault was hinting at. Keeping in mind that Foucault himself was talking about Ancient Greek as the source of ethical transformation, it's important to remember that we are talking about a Eurocentric concept. As Harper Breeze points out "within "ethical consumption," there are unspoken political assumptions associated with the practice" (Breeze, 2010: 15). As we have seen in the emergence of the early animal rights movements in Turkey, there also seems to be a link between this Western idea of ethics and the process of Westernization thus the West itself. She quotes Tamás Dombos' remarks on how in Hungary too early campaigners of ethical consumption were originally from Western Europe and the United States just as the early campaigners for animal rights in İstanbul were too and hence on the possible association between the emergence of ethics and modernity (Dombos quoted in Carrier, 2007).

Furthermore, education, as cultural capital is only available to certain groups of society. This puts veganism, or it can be argued all other sorts of social activism, into the hands of an exclusive group of people who has access to certain cultural and even affective capitals. Although vegans argue and there's enough research that validates a vegan diet as an efficient and nutritious diet (Craig, 2017), ("Vegetarian Diets", 2017), ("Vegan Beslenmeye Onay Veren Sağlık Kurumları", 2017), not only the fact that even this information is only accessible to certain people since they are mostly in foreign languages and won't be represented in Turkish mainstream media but also the risk of social exclusion, may not be something every member of society can afford, make things more complicated than it actually may seem.

4.2.4. Being Labelled Vs Labelling

The act of self transformation does something to how you perceive other people and how other people perceive the new, transforming you. Since veganism comes in with its own theory, be it an informed one as praxis or a new lifestyle, one

changes perspective with this new spectacle they wear; and this new spectacle comes with a cost in terms of both the person who wears it and the world this person looks at now. The cost of social exclusion is one of them. This can either happen in social environments or as I have outlined in Chapter 3, through the misrepresentation of veganism in mainstream media.

Sevi explains how she had been mimed ‘marginalized’ at certain situations mostly at work. She says she had been declared as just an ‘enthusiast’ or even ‘spoiled’ by the people around her: “Aslında genel olarak iş ortamında büyük tepkiler alıyorum. Bazen koşullar dolayısıyla (vegan yiyeceklere ulaşım sıkıntısı olan yerler veya saatler), ben ne yiyeceğim konusunda endişe etmesem dahi insanlar, bunun bir tür yanlış karar, hatta şımarıklık ya da bir tür heves olabileceği yönünde direkt ya da dolaylı yollardan yorumlarda bulunuyorlar. Koşullar açısından zorlayıcı olmayan zamanlarda bile yediğim şeyin farklı olması bazen dikkatlerin üstümde toplanmasına neden oluyor ve genel olarak vegan olmayan bir gurup tarafından marjinal ya da 'değişik' kişi olarak etiketleniyorum.”³²

Other interlocutors talk about being subjected to similar attempts at marginalization too. Berna says she was mostly *bullied* by people who call themselves activists on other social matters, mostly on social media. Güneş talks about how socialization got harder even within friendly circles: “Veganlıktan önce sevgili bulmak daha kolaydı (laughs). Şimdi karşınızdaki insan onu bu anlamda zorlayacağınızı, eleştireceğinizi düşünüyor. Kendi yeme alışkanlıklarıyla yüzleşmek istemediklerinden muhtemelen. Bir de arkadaş ortamlarında vegan olarak etiketlenmek diye bir şey var. *Sanki tek özelliğiniz vegan olmakmış gibi*. Bir 10 sene öncesine göre görece yeni bir kimlik ya şu an, sizi tanıyanlar

³² “Actually in general I get reactions in work environment. Sometimes depending on the conditions and places and times which pose problems in regards to find vegan food, even if I don’t worry about what I will eat, people tend to comment that my veganism is a bad decision, even sauceness or just an enthusiasm in direct or indirect ways. Sometimes when the conditions are not that bad, just because the things I eat is different I get labeled as ‘marginal’ or weird’ by non vegan groups.”

veganlığınızla tanıyor ve kafadan belli bir tipe sokuyor sizi.”³³ The stripping down of a certain person’s identity to a primary characteristic is a common phenomenon with identities which are considered ‘radical’ in terms of resisting the general norms of society. A Muslim in a Christian majority society would come up as ‘the Muslim’; a Black person in a White dominated society will always be recalled on being black. A homosexual person in a heteronormative society will always carry this stigma with themselves. Rejecting/nonconforming the norm emerges as the core quality to one’s existence in the public sphere. A person’s decision to not be involved in a collective action, is both a willing move for that person to isolate themselves from the ‘common’ wrong, and also the isolation of that particular person by the majority of society in regards to the person’s refusal to take part in a certain division of the body of society as well. This deviance from the normal could be understood through what Erving Goffman conceptualized as ‘tribal stigma’ (Goffman, 1990). Although he refers to this stigma as stigma that comes automatically from race, ethnicity, religion and nation independent of a person’s own choices, I’d say since vegans as a group function as a tribal community, sharing one important abnormal, deviant quality in common that dominates their placement in the public space which leads to their being subjected to such discrimination which I argue could legitimize their inclusion under this concept.

Experience of negative reactions from friends and/or family is common after the decision to go vegan for my interlocutors. This points out to an interesting counter reaction from the vegans versus those people too. There’s a mutual harshness in terms of speech and the idea of ‘having enough of them’ is prominent. For instance, as an academician Oğuzhan tells me he is sick of trying to get a sensible

³³ “It was easier to find a partner before going vegan. Now the person in front of you assumes that you will make things difficult and be critical of them. Probably because they don’t want to confront their own eating habits. Another thing is that in friendly environments there’s this thing that you get labelled as vegan. As if your only characteristic is being a vegan Compared to 10 years ago there’s a new identity so people know you through your veganism and categorize you into a certain type.”

feedback from his educated friends: ‘‘Farklı farklı tepkiler geliyor farklı sosyal çevrelerden. Beni en çok şaşırtan eğitilmiş kesim diyebileceğimiz kesimden gelen tepkiler. Yaptıkları yanlışla kılıf uydurmak adına saçma sapan argümanlar öne sürüyorlar.’’³⁴

Bora also had similar experiences in terms of the reaction he got from his social environment on his veganism: He tells me he is more tired of the ‘bourgeois reaction’ he gets from his well-doing environment than other people: ‘‘Bana o tepki biraz şey geliyo, *biraz burjuva bi tepki gibi*. Cahil tepki başka bir tepki bu başka bir tepki, burjuva tepkisi. Okumuşların kendi içersinde belirli bir statüsü, kafası, tüketimi, üretimi neyse, yerinde olanların, onların ürettiği faşizm bi yerde cahillerin ürettiği faşizmden daha sert çünkü burjuva reziztansının ürettiği söylem sanki bi tarafı böyle kendini çok beğenmişlikle kibirle aşırı etik olmakla, bi sürü ithamlar var aslında, şey gibi bence. Fransızca sınıfında ortaokulda Fransızcaya öğrenmeye gelmişsin Fransız aksanlı konuşmaya çalışıyorsun, herkes senle dalga geçiyo. Bu aslında işte birbirimizi aşağıya çekmek.’’³⁵ Here the emergence of the stigmatizing of the vegan shows itself in some sort of a projection. The discriminative speech seems to be adopted by both sides. It’s interesting to see the similarity of the choice of words: Bora’s labelling the reactions as ‘arrogance’ may very well be in parallel of non-vegans calling vegans as ‘arrogant’ too.

Still, this clash and disagreement between vegans and the non vegan world is a very important aspect of the vegan identity; in fact, it can be argued that it is the foundation that constructs the vegan as the vegan. The non-vegan world creates

³⁴ ‘‘I get various reactions from different social environments. I get surprised the most at the ones coming from the educated part. They suggest nonsensical arguments just to make an excuse for their own wrongdoings.’’

³⁵ ‘‘That reaction seems to me like, a bit like a bourgeois reaction. Ignorant reaction is different this reaction is different, bourgeois reaction. Among educated people, who have a certain status, mindset, consumption, production whatever, the fascism they produce is somewhat stronger than the ignorant people’s because the discourse bourgeois resistance produces is somewhat related to in a way being over ethical, arrogant, a lot of accusations. A bit like this I think. When you’re in a French class in middle school, came here to learn French and try to speak in a French accent and everyone makes fun of you. This is actually dragging each other down.’’

the vegan subject through affirming its abnormality, making space for their deviance to move along and open to other transformations along the way. When we think about Foucault's definition of ethics as an ongoing self-transformative act of oneself, Bora's self-constitution of himself as a vegan comes up as a form of reaction, an attempt to break himself so to say, from the patriarchal, normative culture and his friend circle which operates within this culture. Bora also talks about trying to take this attitude towards every oppression form he detects in the dominant culture he is a part of. He talks about 'becoming vegan' in reference to Gilles Deleuze's 'becoming' and 'minor politics' concepts: "Vegan oluş benim için biraz minör oluşa da yol açtı, benim kendi minör oluşuma kendimi küçültmeme de, bölmelere de sebebiyet verdiği için de vegan. Yoksa sadece böyle işte akşam ne güzel tofulu salata yaptım'dan öte bişey olması lazım, kendini küçültmekle ilgili bi şey. Antik Yunan'da Aristo söylüyodu sanırım 'felsefe kendini küçültmektir' diyo. Küçültmek işte şey: aslında tanrı yukardan bakar. Felsefe de en aşağı inerek yapılır gibi bi fikirleri var mesela. En dipte en aşağıda olan. En yerde olan, yoksa yukardan bakınca bi şey görmüyorsun. Tanrı katından her şey zaten aranje edilmiş, yerde perspektif değişiyö. O yüzden bu vegan oluş bende bu tarz komple böyle minör oluşların da yolunu açtı."³⁶

4.2.5. Discrimination Comes in Various Shapes and Sizes

As a matter of fact, most of the other participants have also mentioned a realization of their internalized discriminative behavior towards other minority groups in society after becoming vegan. Still an emphasis on "not everybody who becomes vegan is free from other discriminative actions" was also prominently

³⁶ "Becoming vegan led me to becoming minor too. Vegan, because it caused me to become minor, to small down myself, to divide myself. Otherwise if it was just 'I made tofu salad for dinner', it should be beyond that, it's got to do with smalling yourself down. I think it was Aristo who said 'philosophy is to small down as a person'. Smalling down is this: Actually it is God who looks down from above. Philosophy is made from below. The lowest, the deepest one. The one that's on the ground. Otherwise you don't see anything from above. From God's point of view everything looks arranged, from below the perspective changes. That's why, becoming vegan opened the way for me completely for other becomings."

made. Aydınç, a long time LGBTİ + activist makes the observation that not all vegans are non-homophobic or not all LGBTİ+ people are free from speciesism: “Toplumsal olarak söyle algılar var. Şimdi bir kişi vegan olunca LGBTİ + fobik olmayacağı bekleniyo, aynı zamanda bir kişi LGBTİ + olunca veganlık konusunda daha duyarlı olacağı, çok fazla vegan olmaya yatkın olduğu gibi gibi şeyler var. Fobik veganlar var aynı şekilde türkü LGBTİ +’lar da var (...) Bir LGBTİ + kişisi, LGBTİ + olduğu için bütün ayrımcılıklara karşı çıkmak zorunda diil zaten, o da özünde bi insan ve toplumsal normlarla yaşıyo. Bizim beklentimiz bu toplumsal normların içersinden çıkması ve yani diğer ayrımcılıklara da ses çıkarması, aynı şekilde bi veganın da dğer toplumsal norm görülen ayrımcılıklara karşı çıkması, feministin de aynı şekilde.”³⁷

This is an important recognition. For food has been used as a political tool to underline class differences and to solidify the gap between moral/cultural/political/racial and economic strata among people for a long time, hence I would argue had been an important tool in sustaining *cultural hegemony*, it becomes vital for people who are promoting an alternative way of existence to recognize these internalized discriminative norms even within the vegan community itself. We are living in gendered, racialized, classified and sexualized spaces solidified through likewise epistemologies so while promoting veganism as a moral basis can be a valid goal in terms of social change, since vegans are not sent from a nonpolitical, transcendental dimension to earth to fix the ‘biggest problem of the world’, it’s important to realize all kinds of other factors that come embedded within a certain situation; such as gender, race and other types of socially exclusive systems of behavior.

³⁷ There are perceptions as a society like this. Now if a person goes vegan, it’s expected that they won’t be LGBTİ+phobic, at the same time when a person is a LGBTİ+ it’s expected that they would be more sensitive to veganism, more inclined to become a vegan, things like that. There are phobic vegans, just like that there are speciesist LGBTİ+s. One person doesn’t necessarily have to stand against all kinds of discrimination, they are human on their core and are living with societal norms as well! Our expectation is for them to get out of these norms and I mean stand against other forms of discrimination too. Similarly, for a vegan to stand against other discriminations which are seen as norms, and from feminists too.

4.2.5. To Be a Vegan or ‘The Vegan? That is the Question.

Of all the people I talked, every one of them had strong opinions on their vegan self and saw it as an essential part of their identity while only five of them considered themselves as ‘vegan activists’ (Aydinç, Berna, Gülce, Oğuzhan and Özlem), Oğuzhan calling his version as ‘some sort of activist’, and Berna underlining that she is an activist without an organization. Others also shared this ambivalent approach to activism; while most of them agreed that activism is vital for social change but still they don’t do it anyway, some of them were quite clear on their dislike of activism and activists. For instance, as much as Betül feels happy and content with her vegan identity, she does not see herself as an activist. When I asked why, she responded as: “Genel olarak aktivizmden hoşlanmıyorum. Basitçe anlatmaya çalışacağım. Artık aktivizmin de satışta olduğunu düşünüyorum. Bunun da bir pazarı oluştu. Birisi bana aktivizm ile geldiğinde konuya bakmaksızın dışında kalmayı tercih ediyorum. Sanırım benim için bir şeyin savunucusu olup bağırırmaktansa bunu basitçe gerçek haliyle sessizce yaşamak çok daha etkili. Böyle olunca daha çok etkilenip sahipleniyorum. Herhangi bir ‘izm’ in ya da bir grubun parçası olan insanların düşüncenin ötesinde kendi var oluşlarını gerçekleştirmek, bir gruba, bir etikete ait olmak için orada var olduklarını ve yapılan eylemlerin de bu doğrultu da gerçek ile örtüşmediğini gözlemliyorum. Falan.”³⁸ From her lively mood and positive depictions of her transition to veganism Betül had a ‘happy vegan’ vibe; this could have also to do with her decision to stay away from activism which she finds ‘unrealistic.’ She underlines the effectiveness of ‘living as a vegan’ in terms of making a difference.

Berna also says she finds daily personal activism more effective. “Aktivizmin gündelik anlarda da ortaya çıktığını (veya işleyebildiğini) düşünüyorum” she says

³⁸ “I don’t like activism generally. Let me try to explain simply. I think that activism is also on sale now. There’s a market for this. When someone comes to me with activism I’d rather stay away without even checking the topic. I think for me, it’s more effective to live something simply and silently rather than defending it shouting. I get impressed and I embrace it more that way. I observe people who belong to a certain ‘ism’ or a group, are actually there because they want to realize themselves, to belong to a group a label beyond though and the actions made does not come compatible with reality that way.”

and adds that the practice of veganism itself can have a more impact on the people around you. Sevi has a similar say “Vegan olarak günlük yaşamımdaki tercihlerim ve davranışlarımla insanları etkileyip bir fark yaratabilir ve değişime katkıda bulunabilirim,” but she also says that a faster change is a must since it’s a matter of life and death for animals.

Güneş too finds certain activism tools unrealistic. She says most people stay away from veganism because they think they will be deprived of their ‘already few joys in life’. ‘Otherwise’ she says, ‘etik olarak çok farklı yerlerde durmuyoruz birçoğuyla’.³⁹ This is the reason she thinks it would be useful to work in order to abolish the prejudices about a vegan life style: ‘Konuştüğün zaman evet haklısın diyorlar ama pratikte bir şey yaptıkları yok. Dolayısıyla vegan yiyecek ve diğer ürünlerin ne kadar kolay bulunabilir olduğunu göstermek ve bunların daha da görünür olmasına emek harcamak insanların veganlığa geçişini hızlandırır diye düşünüyorum. Bu anlamda bir şeyler yapmaya, bir hareketin parçası olmaya kendimi daha yakın görüyorum ancak henüz böyle bir iştirakim yok.’⁴⁰

As someone who tried veganism for health reasons other than ethical, Fatma tells me that there were times she got really mad at her vegan activist friends and felt under pressure and this did not help her stick to veganism any more than she did and even now, when she’s no more a vegan, she still feels bored when confronted with such people. She says: ‘Vegan aktivizm ile sadece sosyal medyada karşılaştım. Vegan gruplar vs aracılığı ile. Başlangıçta bana tuhaf, sert, katı, ısrarcı geliyordu vegan aktivizm.’⁴¹

One other interviewee, Onur, has similar views when it comes to being an activist on veganism. He tells me: ‘Aktivist olmak için veganlığı başkalarına anlatmak,

³⁹ “We don’t stand in different positions in terms of ethics with most of them”

⁴⁰ “When I talk to them they say yes you’re right but they don’t do much in practice. So it’s important to show vegan foods are available and I think working to make these products visible may make people’s transition to veganism easier. In that sense I see myself closer to doing something, being a part of a movement but I don’t have such commitment yet.”

⁴¹ “I have only encountered vegan activism on social media. At first vegan activism felt weird, rigid, insistent to me.”

henüz vegan olmayanlarla üzere yüz yüze iletişim kurmak gerekir. Benimse başkalarıyla yüz yüze iletişime geçmek gibi bir motivasyonum yok.”⁴² But he says he still appreciates activism especially vegan abolitionist approach to activism. He is quite aware of what animal rights activists do in İstanbul in the name of veganism and says he is quite hopeful that this movement has potential to evolve but still is very fragile in the world ‘‘particularly in the West’’ because it tends to move to the ‘welfarist’ side of activism.

Bora also mentions a ‘nonbelief’ towards any kind of organized activism and says he sometimes feels sorry that he doesn’t believe in this but the resistance to change sometimes makes him ‘have enough of this’: ‘‘Yani isterdim ama nedense o örgütlülük içersinde genelde, daha önce dahil olduğum o örgütlü olma hali daha çok o iç tüzük tartışmaları, kendi içersinde bir meta üretiyo ve yani o metayı biz tartışıyoruz ve o meta meta oluyor. Oysa ki konu gerçekten şeyse, farklı bişey yaratmak bişey üretmek ise, zaten bunu kendi adıma minör politika olarak yapıyorum ve bu beni mutlu ediyö, huzur veriyö bana. Daha ötesinde bir şey yapmak, çok, ona dair bir duygum yok, afeksiyon geliştiremiyorum onla alakalı. (...) Ben de işte iki iki buçuk sene falan oluyo vegan olalı, ilk beş altı ayı hatta bi senesi yoğun bi şekilde ben kendimce etik olarak doğru olduğuna inandığım bir şey yaparken bunu insanlara onları tahakküm altına almadan yapmaya çalışmak üzerine geçti. Böyle bir gizlenme, yani takiye yaptım gibi hissettim bazen. Niye takiye yapmak zorunda kalıyorum ki zaten düzgün bir şey yapıyorum doğru bir şey yapıyorum kimseye ben senden daha üstünüm etiğim demiyorum ama insanlarda bugün öyle bir baskı var.”⁴³

⁴² ‘‘To be an activist you need to tell about veganism to others, you have to communicate face to face with non vegans. I don’t have the motivation to communicate face to face with people.

⁴³ ‘‘I mean I would have wanted but somehow, within that organizationality generally, when I was a part of an organization before, the discussions within create some sort of a meta and we discuss that meta and then the meta becomes meta. But if the thing is really to create something different, or to produce, I already do it on my own as minor politics and it makes me happy, gives me peace. I don’t have any feelings to do more, I can’t develop any affect that’s related to that (...) It’s been almost two and a half months I became vegan, first five or six months or even a year passed while I tried to do this thing I believe was ethically right and trying to do it in way trying to not oppress other people. Some kind of a hiding like this, I mean I felt like I was reserving in a way. Why did

Bora's remarks on how he struggled to continue being vegan without oppressing others come up as very striking to me and I think at most points sums up an important point about veganism: The assumption that the nature of veganism is unrelated to other forms of structural oppression and that veganism is a concept free from historical baggage. "However, space, vegan or not, is raced (Dwyer and Jones, 2000; McKittrick, 2006; McKittrick and Woods, 2007; Price, 2009) and simultaneously sexualized and gendered (Massey, 1994; Moss, 2008) directly affecting individuals and place identities" says Harper. As societies are built upon these spaces, people make sense of the world through the knowledge that is built on and gathered from these "embodied experiences of the places and spaces we navigate through" (Harper, 2010). She goes on to suggest that "racialized places and spaces are at the foundation of how we develop our sociospatial epistemologies; hence, these epistemologies are racialized". So it's important to remember that the dominant vegan narrative has historical ties to colonialism, cultural bullying and economical stratification of society and furthermore this narrative is promoted through mainstream media with the promotion of veganism as a health related issue that is directed at the middle class, and hence always comes with the risk to speak through a 'hierarchicalized' point. Words like 'compassion' and 'cruel free' which are quite popular in veganism promoting platforms/groups like the Vegan Outreach ("New Guide to Cruelty-Free Eating!", 2017) or even PETA ("Cruelty-Free & Vegan Living & Lifestyle", 2017), contribute into this narrative which Breeze Harper criticizes of "producing and practicing their own 'post-racial' epistemologies and praxis of AR/VEG 'cruelty free ethics'" (Harper, 2010: 18) through overlooking at other forms of oppression embedded in producing of particular vegan food such as sugar or chocolate. So the heavy using of words like 'cruelty free food' and 'eat compassionately' while promoting veganism comes up as tone-deaf and flattened out which don't reflect

I have to do that? I am already doing something nice, something right, not telling anyone that I am superior, more ethical than them but people feel this pressure nowadays."

reality and white washes other forms of oppression hidden inside these practices, hence continues to be a potential political apparatus of the status quo.

CONCLUSION

Over the course this thesis, I have tried to understand the emergence of and the increasing interest in veganism in İstanbul through a more general genealogy of the movement and through studying how this movement intersected with certain forms of power relations and oppression forms such as gender, economics and race since its appearance. My main object of question was the curiosity as to see if vegans in İstanbul were trying to establish a counter norm in an omnivore-normative society that we live in, through choosing an unorthodox diet against the naturalized hence ‘normalized’ practices of existence by the status quo. In the light of this question, starting from the early regulated behavior towards nonhuman animals by human beings, I have tried to outline how people’s approach to nonhuman animals and their attempts at defining the relationship with them have evolved in time. Since today’s dominant vegan discourse is basically a continuation of Western animal rights theories, namely animal welfare and the abolitionist approach, I figured it would be better if I followed the backdrop of these theories; in terms of the ideas and concepts they relied on, as well as the context they did bloom in from.

The investigation I made on the history of abstaining from meat, led to me see how the act of eating animals involved the underlining and the sustainment of cultural statuses and hence contributed into the division of societies as classes through cultural hegemony. From the Caste System in Ancient India to the British colonialist missionaries of 17th century, a certain distinction was attempted at the act of staying away from meat; animal meat which was considered dirty and was linked to violence was assigned for the poor folk, whereas a plant based diet was considered vital on the road to the attainment of religious, bodily and spiritual purity. There emerged how the idea of purity that accompanied the act abstaining

from meat was appropriated in the name of racism too. The Nazis looked up to Indo Aryans who invaded Ancient India and built up one of the most rigid class systems in the history of mankind and was inspired by their ways of solidifying a cultural hegemony through this idea of purity. Still, it's important to see that this diet also emerged as resistance to the establishment in form of veganism too.

Today's dominant vegan discourse in İstanbul relies on two different animal rights theories rooted in the West. The welfare trend which was modelled by Peter Singer on Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian theory and the abolitionist approach developed by Gary L. Francione. Both movements although highly differing in their understanding of animal rights (Singer's theory has been the foundation of the welfare trend which can be seen as the most popular animal rights movement in the world while Francione's is the sole animal rights theory around that strictly advocates veganism and encourages personal activism as opposed to NGO based activism of the welfare trend), share at least one thing in common: The Western narrative which is dominantly white. Although abolitionist vegans seem to be more intersectional in their activism, rejecting single issue campaigns that tend to be sexist and racist at certain points, they too seem to overlooking the fact that morals too is an area that has its share from the colonial history of the West.

In Turkey too, from the first regulations of stray animals during Westernization process in late Ottoman period to the current and first ever animal protection law in Turkey's history, which passed in 2004 in accordance with the negotiations with the European Union, the development in terms of animal rights seem to be speaking through a Western spectacle by the enablement of Western actors with a 'humanist' approach with intentions of regulating and controlling the animal population hence aiming at a better governmentality, also on the state's side.

I have also taken into consideration of the representation of this movement in mainstream Turkish media, analyzing six articles on vegans/veganism in total that has been printed in the last two years by two of the most selling newspapers that

represent different parts of society: Cumhuriyet and Sabah. This analysis pointed out either the lack of positive representation through the negative outcomes of a vegan diet or a one-dimensional, stripped down representation of veganism which mostly is handled as just a diet. The lack of discussion of veganism in Turkish mainstream media, can be seen as a sign of its 'outcasted' characteristic.

The interviews I made with 14 people who identified as vegans, pointed out that there were two main ways as to how people chose to become a vegan in İstanbul. First one was through an emotional catalyst mostly came after a shocking encounter of a violent event regarding animal use by people; such as noticing blood in the eggs that Betül broke and watching a documentary on animal slaughterhouses in the case of Gülce. Most of these participants turned vegans overnight after experiencing such an event. Second path to veganism took a longer time and was motivated mostly by reason than emotion, at the same time covering a wider range of concerns against not only animals but also the environment and health too. These type of processes of conversion brought with them the questioning of other types of political problems and mostly was realized around a time of political turmoil, like Gezi Events.

One other result was that veganism emerged as a transformative apparatus, a technique of the self as Foucault would say, for these people. All of the participants found themselves in a never ending process of 'change' that came in different aspects, spiritual, physical, social and economical. This also, opened the way for them to understand other forms oppression in their lives that they may have overseen before; but sometimes the other way around happened; being against some form of discrimination led the person to be a vegan. Aydinç for instance came to the conclusion that he has to be vegan, after having long conversations with other LGBTİ+ activist friends on various forms of discriminations. As one of the participant named it, the 'conscientious burden' they carried played the role of a slow catalyzer for this ethical transformation they adopted.

The transformative aspect of ethical veganism had various impacts on my interlocutors at various levels but one thing was common: That they had adopted this diet at an attempt to either not be a part of an ongoing cruel act any more, or to be a part of a certain political 'rightness' that needed to be realized within the current system. I have talked about how in both cases this transition brought quite amount of change in their lives not only in terms of diet but also socialization, political stand and bodily and spiritual transformation as well, which in the end emerged as a vital part of their identity. We have also talked about how personal ethical concerns intersected with this change and kept it rolling.

As a sociologist who works on identity Manuel Castells recognizes identity as the "defining principle of social organization; analyzing the importance of cultural, religious, and national identities as sources of meaning for people, and the implications of these identities for social movements" and he formulates three different types of identities: Legitimizing identity, resistance identity and project identity (Castells, 2010). While legitimizing identities work to secure domination over groups of people through institutions, resistance identities tend to use materials from existing values such as history, nation and ethnicity. Project identities on the other hand, aim to change the society through offering new set of values and demanding transformation from all parts of society from institutions to traditions. Castells formulates this identity as such: "a project identity emerges when social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, in so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure" (Castells, 2010: 26). His two basic examples to a project identity is environmentalism and feminism, both which also have developed as huge social movements. These identities act on behalf of the entire society, struggling in the smallest parts of it such as in the family in which he pronounces as 'the key battleground'. I suggest vegan identity in Istanbul can be considered as a project identity too. The personal change that these new identity brings to people inevitably demands, first recognition, then

change from other members of the society, even from the institutions too. For instance, vegans need to work on their place in their core families as people with a new diet inside the house. Then they demand vegan products in the markets, through online petitions or even through just asking. In İstanbul many university campuses had to put vegan options on their lunch menus because of popular demand.

Ekin talks about how she worked in changing her close circle through demanding new set of values: “Ailem içinde arkadaşlarım içinde başlarda yetersiz besleneceğimi düşündükleri için “saçmasapan” bir “heves”e sahipmişim gibi davrananlar oldu, oluyor. Ama çoğu alıştı hatta tavırları değişti. Ailemde herkes artık Vegan ne demek biliyor ve bu konuyu tartışabiliyoruz güzel güzel. Evde yapılan sebze yemeklerinin miktarı da arttı tabii. öte yandan yeme içme, ilaç, giyinme, kozmetik vb. alanlarında alternatiflerin bulunmaması, yokmuşuz gibi davranılması da bir nevi ayrımcılığa giriyor herhalde, ama bunlar da yavaş yavaş oluyor, ben vegan olduğumda hiç olmayan şeyler var anda mesela, vegan peynir, yemeksepeti’nde bir sürü vegan restoran vs.”⁴⁴

Onur had gone through a similar process and how by just becoming vegan and sticking into this in a consistent way he caused a few friends to make the decision to vegan too: “Vegan olduktan sonra sağlığımın bozulacağından endişe eden aile bireylerim önce bu minvalde kaygılarını dile getirdiler, ardından kendimi mahrum ettiğimi zannettikleri besinlerin lezzetinden dem vurarak beni caydırmaya çalıştılar. Şimdiyse vegan olmamak için bahaneler arar hale geldiler. Bir adım sonra vegan olacaklarını düşünüyorum. Arkadaşlarımsa kararımı ya şaşkınlıkla ya

⁴⁴ “At first some of the members of my family and some of my friends have acted as if I had this nonsense enthusiasm going on because they thought I was going to be fed insufficiently. But most of them got used to it even their attitude has changed. Everyone in my family now knows what a vegan is and we can discuss this topic in a nice way. And there’s more vegetable meals cooking in the house too now. Nevertheless, the absence of alternatives in medicine, cosmetics even food as if we don’t exist, may be seen some kind of a discrimination too. Nevertheless, things are changing slowly. There’s stuff now which did not exist when i decided to go vegan; vegan sheee, many vegan restaurants in yemeksepeti.com etc.”

da sevinçle karşıladı, aralarından veganlığa geçenler de oldu.”⁴⁵ But for a few participants it’s not been easy to change their family’s reaction to this transition. For instance, Gülce’s mother did not talk to her for about three months. Ahmet mentions huge discussion and serious sadness within the family and how he still has tense conversations with them whenever the topic of veganism comes up. It can be argued that veganism too, as a project identity may slowly be transforming society by demanding change in various stratas of it such as cultural and political.

One other important input is the role cultural capital plays in my participants’ transition to veganism. Although a vegan diet could be cheap, nutritious and easy to reach, the information on these facts may not be so. All of my participants are university graduate young people who has regular access to internet, books and informed friends; but since we are living in an omnivore-normative society in which even vegetarianism is not represented in the mainstream Turkish media enough, or represented as an elitist consumptional habit, the assumption that people will have the same access to what veganism is and how easy it is to adopt this diet fails.

Abolitionist vegan activism promotes veganism as the moral basis to which the world should convert ASAP and they rely on DIY methods and personal activism rather than working as NGOs. While the demand for the society to go vegan for the animals is definitely fair, the flattened out discourse they practice may not be. On the other hand, the discourse animal welfarists use comes up as more problematic: The single issue campaigns they organize such as protesting horse carriages and fur wearing women or the Sacrifice Feast, tend to oversee other

⁴⁵ Family members who have worried that my health would worsen after I went vegan first expressed their concern over this then tried to change my mind through mentioning the taste of the food they thought I was depriving myself from. Nowadays they are looking for excuses not to be vegan. Next step is they will go vegan I think. My friends either reacted with surprise or pleasure to my decision, and afterwards some of them became vegan too.”

forms of very important discriminations embedded in these actions themselves such as sexism, elitism, racism and even Islamophobia. Here the narrative they both inherit from Eurocentric paradigms become visible. Ramón Grosfoguel argues that “the hegemonic Eurocentric paradigms that have informed Western philosophy and sciences in the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system for the last 500 hundred years assume a universalistic, neutral, objective point of view” (Grosfoguel, 2007); but demanding objectivity can be oppressive for parts of society that was directly hurt hence shaped by these forms of invisible discriminative behavior. We are living on not just a non vegan but also colonized, gendered and racialized geographies and this charged past also inherits our relationship with animals since the dominant discourse on animal rights in the West and also to a degree in İstanbul too is more or less built on this inheritance. That’s why it comes up as very important for veganism to be a careful praxis, keeping an eye on not oppressing one while trying to free another. Rather than insisting that veganism can build a moral base that of which transcends the economical/cultural hierarchies, it’s important to take these hierarchies into consideration and see may be the idea of veganism is also contaminated with the West’s colonial past too. It’s important to realize the White Christian male agent of history may also be the agent of the vegan narrative that the dominant epistemologies are shaped by and according to this agent creates privileged spaces and ontologies. Therefore realizing that as vegans we are also operating within this narrative and being sensitive on how vegan praxis can perpetuate other forms of oppressions such as white supremacy, racism, Islamophobia and elitism and create spaces of exclusion is very important for vegans in their mission to change this omnivore-normative system: That brings out the need for careful self and social management and hence a management of how this identity relates to this narrative is vital in this aimed self and societal transformation. Engaging in a more critical analysis of this narrative and and how these gendered, racialized, white male discourses manifest themselves in writing/talking about and defending veganism, comes up as vital for vegans.

As a movement and identity category, veganism is somehow very young but since the events which lead to the birth of this category dates far back, may be even to the early stages of life on earth, unfortunately I was not able to cover all of the important phases in human-animal relationships in detail with this thesis. The lack of sources on how vegetarianism was used as an ideological apparatus in sustaining the status quo was annoying but so was the lack of sources in how lower classes related to using animals too. It would be unfair to assume that only economic conditions determined the state of the relationship people form with animals in their lives. Therefore, I still think there needs to be more studies focusing on the affective side of animal use and how this affects change our perception of animals and ourselves in relation to them. Finally, with all the limitations to it in mind, I hope to have contributed into what Laura Wright calls as ‘Vegan Studies’ from this side of the world at least through this humble genealogy of veganism in İstanbul.

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